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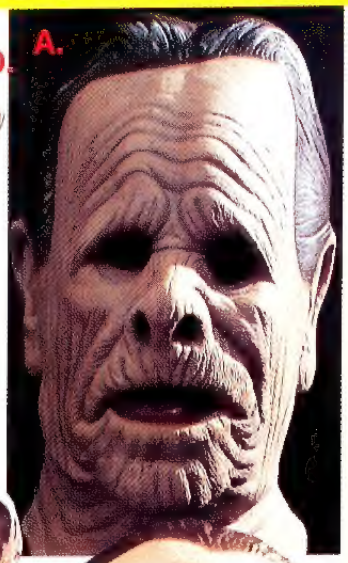

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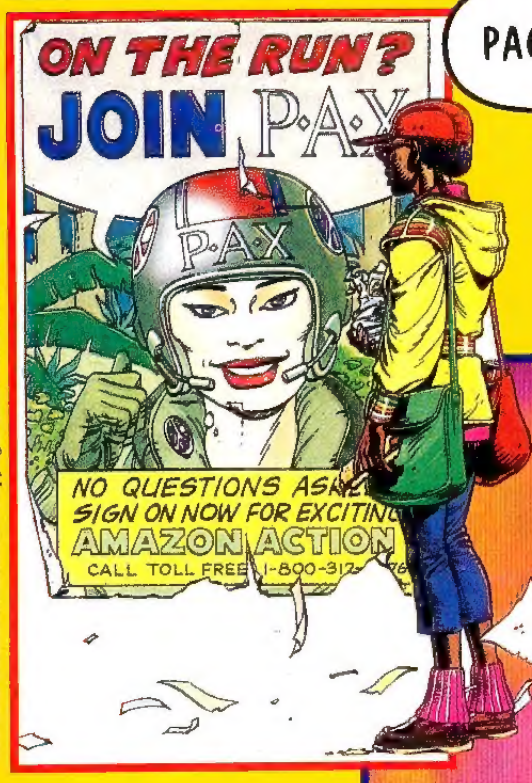

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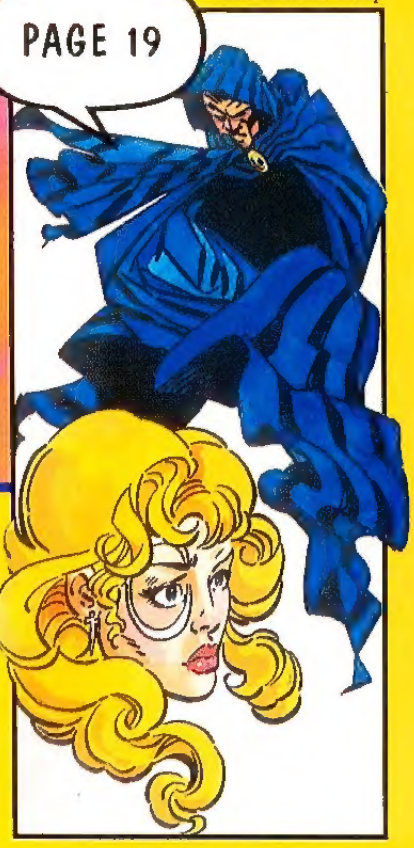

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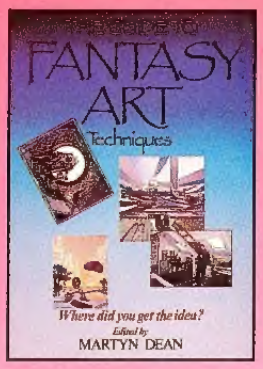

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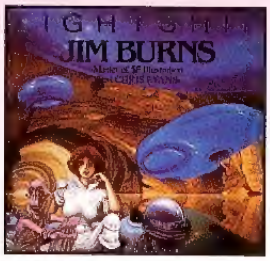

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WORD BALLOONS

Heroic Meetings

Down at the Disney-MGM Studios, as part of the *Dick Tracy* premiere extravaganza, I finally met Max Allan Collins, mystery scribe extraordinaire and writer of the *Tracy* newspaper strip (for Max's crimestopper comments, see last issue). Nearly a decade ago, I interviewed Max by phone for an article in the original COMICS SCENE, but we had never met before in person. So, that was a pleasure.

For my money, the best part of the film's release is the accompanying increase in publishing: Max's novelization as well as a new *Dick Tracy* strip collection (and hardcover *Tracy* reissues), Gladstone's extremely welcome Chester Gould reprint comic (begun with Mrs. Pruneface!), Jay Maeder's fascinating biography of the detective and the new short story anthology.

The merchandising frenzy is such that Berkley Books is even reprinting (under one of its imprints) *Dick Tracy* by William Johnstone. That novel's at least 20 years old and not very exciting. However, the good news is that Max Allan Collins—whose Eliot Ness, Mallory and Nolan mystery novels are terrific—is embarking on a new series of mystery paperbacks for Bantam Books starring Dick Tracy. There'll be at least three—all set in the strip's classic periods and probably involving Gould's most infamous bad guys. And *that's* exciting.

Just a week after tarrying in Florida, I was in Pennsylvania with COMICS SCENE's Will Murray for a rather intimate Green Hornet convention and the chance to meet another hero, Van Williams, the actor who played the Hornet on '60s TV. No longer acting, Williams has attended to ranching and other interests while serving as a deputy sheriff in California.

Van Williams has been profiled near these parts before—in a piece by Will Murray in STARLOG #135 that Williams calls "the best interview ever done" with him—but here was the opportunity for an encore (page 40). It's a profile, again by Will Murray, that was actually written before this Pennsylvania sojourn and Van Williams' recent personal appearances at both the Chicago and San Diego Comic Cons. I certainly hope some of you got a chance to meet him at those cons. What a great guy! Van is not only a reel hero and a *real* hero, but he's a nice guy, too.

The very next day, in New York, under the shadow of the city's new Worldwide Plaza skyscraper, Will Murray and I spent some time with another hero, a legend named Joe Simon, comic book maker.

Simon, too, is no stranger to these pages—discussing, alongside legendary collaborator Jack Kirby, the creation of the immortal Captain America (CS#14) and the satiric Fighting American (CS#11). Now, Simon (with son Jim Simon) has written *The Comic Book Makers*, an autobiographical history of comics and their creators. I've read it—and recommend it highly to any fan, not only for its amazing stories of the medium's beginnings and life with Kirby, Wally Wood, Bob Powell, Al Capp and so many, many others, but for its intriguing historical bonuses like the Simon & Kirby classics (Boy Commandos, Bullseye, etc.), the '50s congressional testimony on comics and the secret origin of Spider-Man.

The Comic Book Makers ($18.95 U.S., $21.95 Canada) should be on sale late this month at most well-stocked comics stores. It's also available by mail. Write Simon/Crestwood II Publications, 330 W. 56th Street #6M, NY, NY 10019. It's profusely illustrated—16 pages of color—and includes a never-before-published Simon & Kirby story.

This is a *must-have* volume—and we just couldn't pass up the chance to present a sample this issue. But what to publish? Joe Simon's whole book is such fun that it wasn't easy to select one delicious excerpt—so we've included entries from no less than five chapters (all somewhat abridged). So, turn to page 29 and you'll get your chance to meet some heroes, just a few of the people Joe Simon calls *The Comic Book Makers*.

—David McDonnell/Editor

COMICS SCENE RETURNS with (we promise) artist **Neal Adams**...ultra-prolific writer **Alan Grant**...and—dare we admit it?—**Brooke Shields**. Yes, well, the color photos of her stint as Brenda Starr are nice. Judge for yourself in **COMICS SCENE #16, on sale October 23.**

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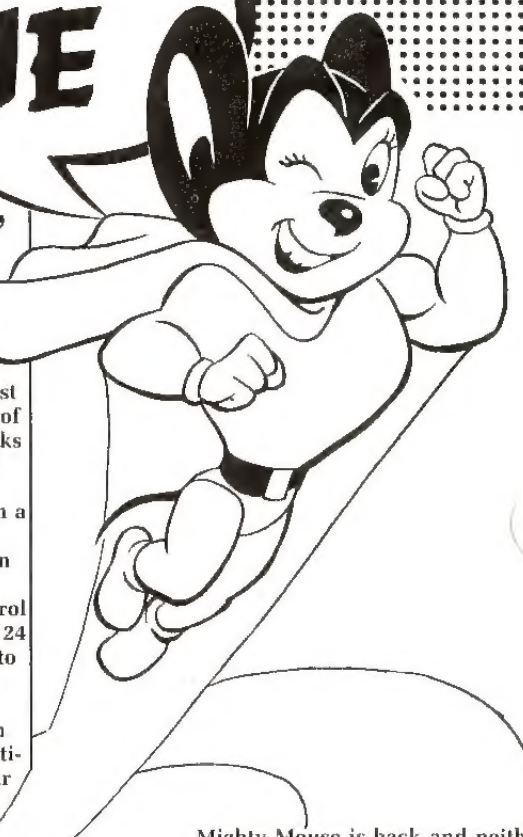
Let's Do the "Time Warp" Again...

For 15 years, *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* has played for its wildly devoted fans, becoming more than just a cult movie, but also a way of life for some. And now, thanks to Caliber Press, characters like Frank N Furter and Magenta can also be found in a three-issue monthly now on sale. Doing the Time Warp in four-color are writer/artist Kevin VanHook and wife Carol for each issue that contains 24 pages of story and art plus (to help all those "virgins" still out there) 18 pages of background material with tips on proper midnight screening etiquette as when to squirt your water gun or throw toast at the screen.



Mouse Art: Ernie Colon/Marie Severin/Courtesy Marvel Comics

Mighty Mouse is back and neither Oil Can Harry nor Batman are safe as "The Dark Might Returns."

If Adventure Comics Has A Name

Photo: Murray Close/Trademark & Copyright 1989 Lucasfilm Ltd.

There may or may not be a film in the future for Indiana Jones but he'll be riding into stores on Dark Horse Comics.

A comic book is not a movie and therefore non-stop action will not translate into entertainment on the comic book page," observes Dark Horse Comics' Marketing Director Bob Schreck, and this will be no different when the man with the hat returns to the comics field on a Dark Horse in spring '91. The company which has been quite successful in its movie tie-ins (see page 49), while not disparaging Marvel's efforts, think they have the proper handle on the George Lucas & Steven Spielberg character. "Indiana Jones requires some characterization and probably many more plot intricacies than would be acceptable with other adventure stories." And reveals Schreck, Dark Horse has an added advantage to the archaeologist's licensed cliffhangers. "We have Indiana Jones, young and old. We can go back to his past as a child, as the last movie showed, or we can see him as an old man."

At this time, no creative team has been signed, but with the coming of this new comics series, a new set of paperback stories and rumors of a Young Indy movie, there can be no doubt that Indiana Jones will ride again!

—Eddie Berganza

Here He Comes Again!

Even in a world that considers stopping to sniff a flower a crime, you can't keep a good hero down for long. "Mighty Mouse has been retired for five years when issue one starts," explains Fabian Nicieza, editor of the super rodent's new ongoing series from Marvel Comics. The title picks up the pieces where the Ralph Bakshi Saturday morning CBS cartoon left off.

"It incorporates *all* the incarnations of Mighty Mouse over the last 40 years, now almost 50. Michael Gallagher is the regular writer with artist Ernie Colon and inker/colorist Marie Severin, although there will be various issues by various people," continues Nicieza. Among them are Doug Cushman and Milt Knight, who worked on the Mouseville Marvel's Spotlight series.

With the mouse of steel around, no comic will be safe as a take-off on popular series will be featured in every alternate issue. "Number one is a *Dark Knight* parody which reintroduces the character," says the editor. A poke at Todd McFarlane's Spider-Man follows as well as a *Crisis on Infinite Earths* spoof called "Mices on Infinite Earth" featuring a George Perez cover. "Issue three will have a cover by John Byrne. There will be two stories—one is Mighty Mouse vs. Prince Samor and the second one is Bat-Bat's solo feature," announces Nicieza, heralding the return of the mighty camp crusader and Tick, the Bug Wonder from the Bakshi cartoon. Bat-Bat will be drawn by Michael Kazaleh, one of the series' animators. But more importantly adds Nicieza, "We'll get to the Cow, we'll get to all of them. Oil Can Harry appears in the first issue—it's the first time he has appeared in a comic book in, I think, 40 years.

"There will be a little of everything..." Fabian Nicieza pauses trying to find the right words for this comic event, "a potpourri of goofy superhero fun!"

—Eddie Berganza

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All Spirits Art: Charles Vess

By FRANZ HENKEL

ILLUSTRATED SPIRITS

When Charles Vess got Highland Fever, Spider-Man swung off on a trip to Scotland.

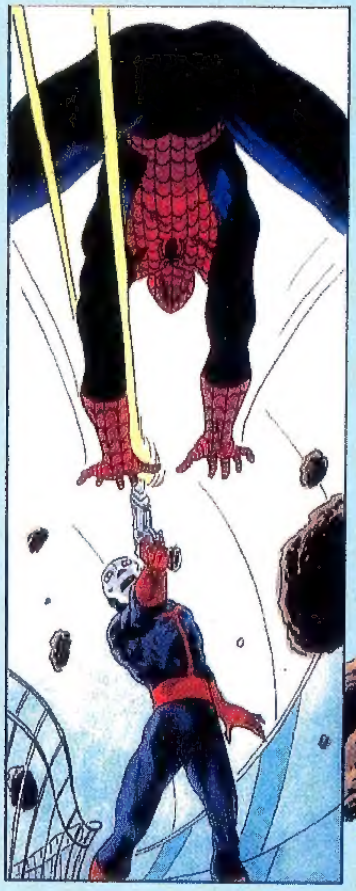
One wouldn't expect it from his fantasy art and the pastoral and mythical landscapes for which he's noted, but Charles Vess lived in New York City for 11 years before moving upstate. Vess has always been more interested in trees, stones and meandering water than in the urban world associated with Spider-Man, but, guided by a tinge of nostalgia for the city, he has combined the urban and the organic in what may prove to be one of the most unusual Spider-Man stories ever to appear. His Spider-Man graphic novel, *Spirits of the Earth*, now on sale, is set in *Scotland*.

Vess' involvement with Spider-Man began years ago while he was still sharing Michael Kaluta's place in Manhattan. "I was in the bathroom," he recalls with some amusement. "Mike was on the phone with Marvel, and he had just turned down a *Spider-Man* cover. He asked me, 'How would you like to do a *Spider-Man* cover?' I said, 'No.' He was on the phone for another minute, and he called back, 'There's a cape in it.' So, I said, 'Well, maybe I'll do it.'

"It turned out that they needed this cover overnight. I submitted a drawing with gobs of white-out on it the next day, and [then-Marvel editor] Jim Owsley called me back suggesting I should paint it, so I had to figure out a way to paint over all that white-out. I ended up doing some covers on spec, including the one of Spider-Man in his black costume crouched between the gargoyles. When they came out with *Web of Spider-Man*, they used it for the first cover."

Vess also did "The Cry of the Wendigo" story in *Amazing Spider-Man* #277, and, sometime later, he wrote a draft of what was to become *Spirits of the Earth*. "When Jo Duffy was still an editor for Epic, I sent her the story," Vess recalls. "She liked it and passed it on to Jim Shooter, and then it just sat there for two years."

Vess rewrote his initial draft, and



HYDRA was cut off from tangling with the web-slinger, and the more lucrative and interesting looking Hellfire Club brought in.

just before his two-month trip to Scotland, he submitted it simultaneously to Al Milgrom, Jim Salicrup and Tom DeFalco, confident that it would be accepted. "I sort of decided that it would happen," Vess says. "It was like one of those things where you say, 'OK, this is going to be real.' Well, when I got back, I happened to stop by the Marvel offices. An assistant editor poked his head out the door as I was walking by in the hall, and he said, 'It's a go.' "

The story for *Spirits of the Earth* strongly reflects Vess' love of Scotland, something that makes perfect sense to anyone who has seen the landscape of upstate New York. "I have a fixation on Scotland," Vess confesses. "I'm a sort of 'Scotti-o-phile'—I've got 'Highland Fever.'

"I wanted a story that I would want to draw for 64 pages, because that's the length I thought it would be when I first started. I knew that I didn't want to draw 64 pages of New York City, so I thought that if I limited the city scenes to six pages, I could draw it as beautiful as I've seen it.

"There are times when you come in from a trip, flying in on the plane—it's just after dusk and the whole city is sparkling and bright like a great toy, and you just can't wait to get in there. That's how I wanted to paint it. But I knew that if I was going to stretch that over 64 pages, I would run out of steam. I would get tired of drawing all those *windows, drainpipes, alleyways.*"

Since he knew it would become a long story, Vess ultimately combined his personal interests with something he knew would also have commercial appeal. What finally made the project cohere was the theme of City Magic versus Country Magic. "The theme came very early on," Vess recalls, "and then it just all started falling into place. Other things, like the movie *Local Hero*, were sitting in my mind, and probably a couple of comic book stories, too, but basically I was drawing something I *wanted* to draw."

The next problem Vess faced was in creating the conflict that was to provide the story's action and motivation. He needed an interesting villain. "Well," Vess says, "I thought I would have to come up with someone who wants to take over the world, something significant.

"At first, I was thinking of using HYDRA, who appeared in *Nick Fury*, because I had always liked their costumes. But a friend of mine, Mark Askwith [who co-wrote *The Prisoner* for DC], suggested the Hellfire Club. He said, 'They have great costumes, you'll love drawing them, and the sales will be better.' So, I did some research on them, and yes, these guys' costumes were *great.*"

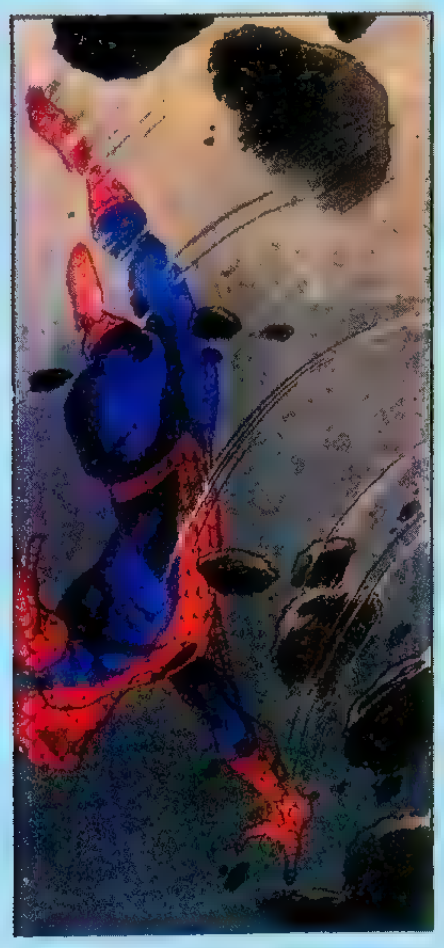
It wasn't until after Vess had lived in the West Highland village of Plockton and hung out at a local pub between expeditions into the countryside that the final form of the story became clear to him. "While I was in

Scotland, I just bought a whole bunch of reference materials, did a lot of drawings, and took a lot of pictures," he says.

"One thing about the graphic novel is that there's a whole long sequence in the pub I used to hang out in while I was there. I made it a little more rustic than the real one, but all the local regulars of the pub are featured in the story. The people I rented my cottage from are in the story, too. In fact, much of the graphic novel is based on what's actually there. I've just altered the landscape and made the castles bigger and gloomier.

"By the time I had returned, and was ready to start drawing, there were a few changes in the world of Spider-Man," says Vess. "By then, Peter Parker was married, and he had reverted to his red and blue costume, so I had to make a few changes from my storyline, which was based on Spidey in his black costume."

Since Spider-Man was now married, Marvel wanted Vess to feature Mary Jane in the story—something he hadn't originally intended. "I initially had some misgivings about having to put Mary Jane in the story," Vess says, "but then when I thought about it, she suggested some interesting possibilities in that setting—like what sort of things could a woman of her character cause to happen in a tiny Scottish pub?



"Spider-Man is used to the city with all the tall buildings he can swing from," but in Scotland, says Vess, "he has to get on the ground and *run*."

"Mary Jane inherits a small cottage from a distant aunt, so she and Peter go out to Scotland to have a look at it and have a second (or third or fourth) honeymoon. Peter's all bent out of shape being out of the city and in a little village, and so Mary Jane keeps him occupied and interested. She also hangs out at this little pub, plays pool, flirts—you know, doing Mary Jane's thing. She makes the air crackle around her. She's definitely not sitting on the sidelines.

"But the Scottish town they go to is invaded by ghosts and goblins, and when Spider-Man tries to figure it out, he eventually discovers that a would-be member of the Hellfire Club is trying to drive the townspeople out.

"Spider-Man is used to the city with all the tall buildings he can swing from. Now he's in a place where the buildings don't go over two stories, and some of the *trees* are taller. There's no place for him to swing from, so sometimes he has to get down on the ground and *run*."

The artist doesn't want to reveal the story's conclusion, but he notes that Peter Parker isn't "the teenage, overly angst-ridden character we're used to from Marvel. He's doing well in his work—in his studies and in his science. He's much happier in this story." Of the work as a whole, Vess says with some humor: "It's like a Carl Barks Uncle Scrooge adventure drawn more realistically."

Vess has always been more of a fantasy artist than a comic book artist, and his work on *Spirits of the Earth* has been compared more to his illustrations for William Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* than to mainstream comic book art. "I used to read *Spider-Man* when I was a kid," he says. "For the idea of Spider-Man, I would go back to Steve Ditko, but artwise, my influences are more the classical illustrators like Arthur Rackham and Howard Pyle.

"The originals for *Spirits of the Earth* are a third larger than the standard 10" x 15" comic book original, but I'm going through the usual process of pencilling and inking before I paint over it. Of course, the ink lines are much looser, and there aren't as many large black areas. For many of the open areas, I'll paint in misty landscapes or trees in the background.

"I work in inks that are glazed on—part of my fine arts training again—not Dr. Martin's transparent dyes, which are very fugitive; they're a commercial illustration medium that's designed to last long enough to get to the printer. I'm working in a more difficult medium because I want the originals to last. To get a green with these inks, you put down a blue and then a yellow, and you get a sort of shimmery, living green—not what you get out of a pre-mixed bottle."

Vess notes that fan response to the graphic novel, and to his different interpretation of Spider-Man, has been very positive thus far. And with Todd McFarlane priming the market with his new *Spider-Man* (see CS SPECTACULAR #2), the enthusiasm is crossing over to other Spidey books as well.

All Spirits Art: Trademark & Copyright 1990 Marvel Entertainment Group

Charles Vess' plans for Spidey's excellent highland adventure altered when the hero reverted to his old costume.

"It's Spider-Man Summer—a magic moment in time," says Vess with amusement, comparing the phenomenon with last year's Batmania. "Everyone's crazy for Spider-Man. It wasn't at all planned, but it's just all coming out at the right time. I turned *Spirits of the Earth* in last October, and at first they scheduled it for the beginning of June, but I think the savvy guys in the sales department decided that they would start with Todd McFarlane because everyone was crazy about him."

Among Vess' other projects for the near future are: *The Sandman* #19, with writer Neil Gaiman, incorporating Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* once again; an 18-page fantasy story called "Morgaine Tales," with writer Elaine Lee (of *Starstruck*); the cover to Dark Horse's *Cheval Noir* #11; the third issue of DC's *The Books of Magic*, again with Gaiman; and a *Classics Illustrated* adaptation of *Arabian Nights*.

Vess doesn't know at this point whether he'll be doing another Spider-Man story or a mainstream superhero tale. "Although they're lucrative, I wouldn't do a regular superhero title month after month," he says. "I'm more interested in specific *stories*, and if there's a particular story I like involving a superhero, I might do that as a limited series or a graphic novel.

"Well," Charles Vess says, pausing to reflect for a moment, "*unless* it involves some horrible, garish costume. There are a lot of awful costumes out there."

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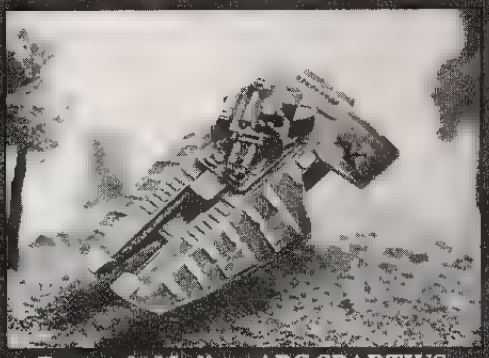

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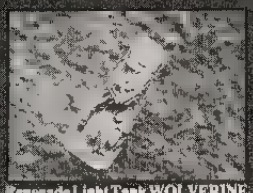

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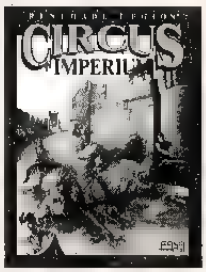

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Art Dave Gibbons

Having worked on a creative project that turns out to be a success is a gratifying experience for any writer or artist. But success is a double-edged sword; recognition often means you get to choose your future projects, yet at the same time having a higher profile means the pressure is on. Expectations increase.

For British artist Dave Gibbons, the man who brought the *Watchmen* to life with Alan Moore, the challenge was to tackle two totally different projects: one, *Give Me Liberty*, a collaboration with fellow groundbreaker Frank Miller, and two, turning his hand to writing, reviving the classic team-up title *World's Finest* for DC, with Steve Rude as artist.

Like *Watchmen*, *Give Me Liberty* is a thought-provoking work which questions Truth, Justice and The American Way, only without masked heroes. *World's Finest*, however, is a complete reversal of the *Watchmen* ethos, a return to comic book fundamentals, eschewing the psychological dissection of superheroes as popularized by Alan Moore's masterwork

"I've found writing *very* satisfying and a great change of pace," Gibbons admits, "because the considerations are different. They're just as difficult as illustrating but it's a release after the normal flight. But pursuing that wasn't so much a desire to show people I could do things other than illustrate something like *Watchmen*, it was basically the desire to tell a story. The reason why I'm attracted to the comics medium is the fact that you're moving a narrative through the fourth dimension using illustrations, and I've always felt one of the qualities of my art is that it *clearly* tells a story. I think I have a good notion

Based on *Watchmen*, Gibbons would have had the clout to write and draw his own story, but he wanted to earn the privilege alone.

Watchmen Characters & Art Dave Gibbons/Trademark & Copyright 1986 DC Comics Inc

what makes a strong story so it was time to find out."

Give Me Liberty, the first two issues of which are now available from Dark Horse Comics, came about through a mutual desire to collaborate but grew away -"organically," as Gibbons puts it—from his or Miller's original intention of creating a primarily political story. "The initial outline was much more political, very serious in tone," he recalls. "But we both spontaneously decided we *didn't* want to take it in that direction. Our feelings were there had been a glut of stories dealing with soul-searching in the American heartland, books expounding on the state of man, the universe and the U.S. political system. We decided to make it more action-packed, more fun, a story that basically encapsulated the joy of comics."

Taking its title from a quote by Patrick Henry—"I know not what

Storytelling Days

For Dave Gibbons, the challenge of comics still lies in exploring the superheroic.

By PHILIP NUTMAN

course others may take, but as for me, give me Liberty or give me death" the four-part mini-series follows the exploits of Martha Washington, a 16-year-old African-American, and her search for personal liberty. "Martha's story is basically a quest for survival in near-future America. She's born into a situation of extreme disadvantage in a Chicago ghetto, she lurches from one crisis to the next, is committed to a mental institution, joins the army to escape life on the streets, and generally runs into a lot of trouble," Gibbons explains. "It's part science fiction, part war story, a sort of *Pilgrim's Progress* as seen through future society, but I'm loath to discuss specifics as I think readers will have fun discovering what happens."

Working with Frank Miller was clearly a pleasure for Gibbons, and the interplay of ideas between the two artists appears to have lifted the story out of a potential dystopian cul-de-sac, the old here's-the-future-and-it's-not-nice scenario. "It's about hope, about maintaining your principles in the face of great opposition. Martha is a very moral and proper young woman; the last thing in the world she would want to do is upset her mom," he notes with a tone of almost fatherly pride before giving a short laugh. "She cares a great deal about what her mom thinks. But obviously, along the way she runs into situations where it would be hard to tell what *anyone's* mom would think is the right thing to do."

Working from Miller's initial stream-of-consciousness outline, Gibbons made sketches of the principal characters and injected his own ideas. Miller then refocused the material and Gibbons made thumbnail sketches of specific details Eventually, they had a 91-page first installment which was revised down to a more manageable 48 pages. "It was really like nurturing a seed, watching it blossom and grow out into many different directions."

One of these directions turned out to be an undercurrent of humor absent from the basic proposal. By decentralizing the story's political core, Miller and Gibbons found considerable irony in Martha's quest for personal liberty. "The question of liberty is fundamental to the American Constitution but what it entails in reality is a huge bureaucracy, paradoxically a tremendous conformity. Frank came up with titles for the books which could be the names of departments in the U.S. Government, or at least very American institutions which symbolize what the notion of liberty has become. For example, issue #1 is called 'Homes and Gardens.' Another issue is 'Travel and Entertainment.' So there's a deep irony between the idea and the reality. But we don't want readers to think they're in for a glum tract. Although we've tackled some serious concerns, there's a great deal of humor in this series. It's a fun comic."

TODAY, MORE THAN EVER-- OURS IS THE LAND OF OPPORTUNITY...
..FOR EVERY AMERICAN...
P·A·X
I WAS BORN ON THE WRONG SIDE OF THE TRACKS, IF YOU KNOW WHAT I MEAN ..
...AND I GUESS MAYBE I DIDN'T HANDLE IT SO WELL ...DRUGS ARMED ROBBERY AND YEAH, MURDER ONE
I'D STILL BE ON THE RUN IF IT WEREN'T FOR THE PEACE FORCE
SIGN ON WITH PAX AND THEY'LL CLEAR YOUR RECORD NO QUESTIONS ASKED
AND EVERYTHING YOU LEARNED ON THE WRONG SIDE OF THE LAW? DON'T WORRY..
P.A.X
...YOU'LL GET TO USE IT!
CHKCHAKK

Art Dave Gibbons

For Dave Gibbons, part of the pleasure of the comics medium is its range of possibilities, that the field's elasticity allows for educating and entertaining, though not necessarily at the same time. *Give Me Liberty* is a book designed to do both, to stir the intellect as much as the adrenalin. "But I do want to emphasize the fact it's an *adventure* story first and foremost," he adds. "We started writing it in the immediate post-*Watchmen*, *Dark Knight* period when it seemed seriousness was the next direction. Although we never verbalized it, our intention was to do a political comic book, but our basic instincts were to tell an exciting story. Also, many superheroes are now experiencing real problems. Green Lantern is wandering around with two days' growth of stubble, feeling sorry for himself; others are dealing with alcoholism. We wanted to get away from that."

Which was one of the main reasons Gibbons jumped at the chance of writing a new *World's Finest*. "Many of the comics that are getting attention

"The initial outline was much more political, very serious in tone," admits Dave Gibbons of his *Give Me Liberty* collaboration with Frank Miller.

HOLD YOUR FIRE!
BUTT OUT, PAL! THIS AIN'T METROPOLIS..
TRUE ENOUGH BUT YOU'VE NO RIGHT TO MURDER PEOPLE LIKE THIS EVEN IN GOTHAM!
THEY'RE JUST CHILDREN..
THEY'RE SABOTEURS--AND WE'RE RESPECTABLE BUSINESSMEN, DEFENDIN OUR PROPERTY
WE'VE GOT EVERY RIGHT
IT'S THE AMERICAN WAY.
WHOSE SIDE ARE YOU ON, ANYHOW?

Art Steve Rude

these days are rather grim, and there's this slew of bleak and cheerless horror comics that DC publishes. I find it exciting to run counter to that. If everything going on was silly and inconsequential, I might want to write something serious. You have to be true to your feelings when choosing projects because it's so easy to look at what's in vogue and add to that. For a while after *Dark Knight*, there seemed to be this feeling of 'let's out-*Dark Knight Dark Knight* with Batman,' so we had *The Cult*, *Arkham Asylum* and other stories going in a certain direction. That's entertaining enough but it's rather like taking a sledgehammer to a doll, it's easy to pull apart something as elemental, as fairy tale-like as Batman or Superman. It seems to be excess for its own sake. My feelings towards Batman and Superman, particularly the notion of them being teamed up in *World's Finest*, is to see the two characters together. In my formative years, the

"As far as Superman's concerned, for me," says Gibbons "he is the Jerry Siegel and Joe Schuster character, the super Boy Scout."

only team-up comic around was *World's Finest*, and that comic has always occupied a fond place in my memories. It still gives me a buzz to see Superman and Batman standing together in the same picture. Nowadays, however, that coin has been devalued as everybody stands around in everybody else's picture," he laughs. "But I wanted to have my crack at writing what I once felt was the best comic ever."

Gibbons is quick to admit his approach to the characters—Batman in particular—has been shaped by the feelings he now has in his late 30s and by Frank Miller's work on *Dark Knight* and *Batman: Year One*. "What Frank has done with Batman is definitive, and I would have to say that *Year One* is probably the best comic book story I've ever read on a number of levels. As far as Superman's concerned, for me, he is the Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster character, the super Boy Scout. Although I hope readers do pick up on the dark undercurrents in the series, basically it's the kind of story that had I read it when I was 10, I would have enjoyed. I hope it appeals to

Green Lantern Characters & Art: Dave Gibbons/Trademark & Copyright 1983 DC Comics Inc.

Before comics got "serious", Gibbons came to Green Lantern's rescue.

young and older fans alike."

If you read "Survivor," the superhero story Gibbons wrote in issue one of the British book *Al*—illustrated by Ted McKeever—you might be understandably confused. A tale of super-alienation depicting the worst aspects of what it could be like to

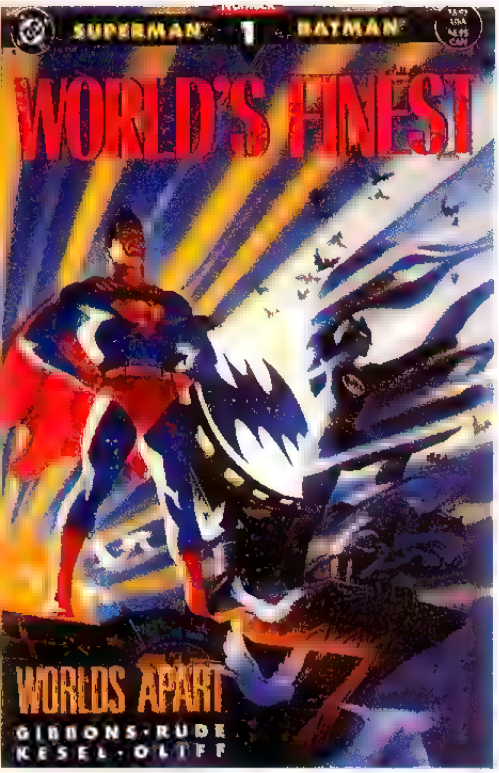
For Batman's part in *World's Finest*, Gibbons relied on Frank Miller's redefinition of the character, while artist Steve Rude went to the classic basics.

KOF! WHAT'S--? KOFF-KOF!
D-DON'T..
POLICE! HOLD IT!
OH, NO... BATMAN ALL I NEED!
I'LL PRETEND I DIDN'T SEE YOU...
MY REPORT'S GONNA BE COMPLICATED ENOUGH ALREADY..
METROPOLIS POLICE

World's Finest Characters & Art: Trademark & Copyright 1990 DC Comics

Art Steve Rude

Art: Steve Rude

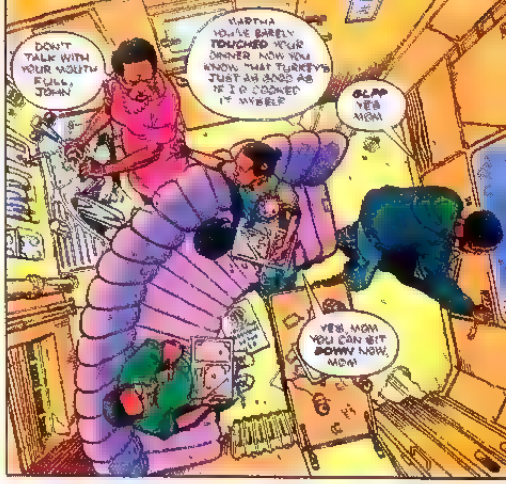


"I wanted to have my crack at writing what I once felt was the best comic ever," Gibbons admits.

have super powers, it was a bleak story in the *Watchmen* mold. But the strip didn't reflect Gibbons' real feelings towards the character. "I should point out that *wasn't* Superman, he was a generic superhero, before anyone at DC thinks I was plagiarizing their character. I just wanted to write a story that probed the question of what the worst aspect of being a character like Superman could be, what it's like to be totally alone, to be inferior in some respects by virtue of your superiority. It wasn't an idea I would want to dwell upon at any great length. What Alan and I did with *Watchmen* was to say 'OK, if one superhero existed, the world might be like this,' to try and approach it in those terms while still dealing with comic book conventions and a great deal of improbability. The *Al* story was a lot like that, a desire to get real yet keep it within comics' own realm. If you get too real about it, the premise falls apart. If you stand on the roof of a building and look down, you realize the implausibility of fighting crime by swinging amongst the rooftops. The most successful superhero comics are those that work within their own terms."

Drawn by Steve Rude of *Nexus* fame, *World's Finest* marks a return to classic style comics art: clean lines, a sense of fluid motion and dynamic action. A longtime admirer of Rude's, Gibbons describes the result of their collaboration as "stunning." "Steve can render the real nuances of peoples' expressions in a unique way and I don't think there's any other artist—apart from Brian Bolland, who comes real close—who can capture that. In one issue, for example, there's a wonderful picture of Lois Lane blowing the fringe of her hair up and I've never seen anyone attempt to do that. Steve also has an instinct for the fabulist aspects of comics; he has given the characters a real human feeling, in body language, expressions, but the world isn't the real one, it's the characters' own.

"He has done exactly what I wanted with Superman and Batman," enthuses Gibbons, "which is return them to their elemental appearances. What he has done, which differentiates our vision of *World's Finest* from the '50s version, is give the characters different physical characteristics. In '50s comics, people tended to wear the same suits, look very similar; Steve has ensured everyone is different. I can't imagine anybody doing a better job."


DON'T TALK WITH YOUR MOUTH FULL, JOHN!
MARTHA YOU'VE BARELY TOUCHED YOUR DINNER. NOW YOU KNOW THAT TURKEY'S JUST AS GOOD AS IF I'D COOKED IT MYSELF!
SLAP YES MOM
YES, MOM YOU CAN SIT DOWN NOW, MOM

Lately, there has been a great deal of discussion concerning the future of superhero comics. Things have definitely changed in the post-*Watchmen* era: If certain characters have "grown up"—exhibiting real psychological quirks, perhaps facing their greatest battles with themselves—where does the field go from here? Gibbons, for one, is certain the magic will never disappear, that the genre will not become bogged down in social realism. "I think there always will be superhero comics as they seem tailor-made for the format. It's no accident that 60 years after the introduction of color comics, most of them *still* feature costumed heroes. As we start reading comics at an early age, I believe the appeal is always there, something in the human psyche is reassured by their existence."

Gibbons concedes that heroes have changed and feels the appearance of *Watchmen* and *Dark Knight* was an inevitable step in the medium's evolution. "Children always want the next step one: One day *Transformers* are cool, the next they're really childish. If you observe kids, a 12-year-old will

"I've always felt one of the qualities of my art *clearly* tells a story," says Gibbons.

Art Dave Gibbons

HK--
HK--
HK--
CREDIT CARDS-- A BANK CARD-- THE KIND YOU USE IN THOSE MACHINES ON THE STREET--
--THOSE COMPUTERS ON THE STREET THAT ANYBODY CAN GET INTO --IF THEY'VE GOT A CARD--

"Coming up with different slants on each other's ideas," Gibbons and Miller fashioned a world for Martha Washington where "disease is a crime."

make out he's 10 years older than an 11-year-old, and I feel the current vogue with superheroes is very like that. It's a 12-year-old saying to a 10-year-old, 'Oh, they're really silly. Have you ever thought how stupid Red Kryptonite is?' It's an adolescent game, one I've partaken of myself, but I still believe there's a way for adults to enjoy superheroes, approaching them with true feelings is preferable to just being clever for the sake of it."

He is already at work on further projects—the specifics of which, sadly, Gibbons is not at liberty to discuss—and the next logical step is for him to illustrate his own stories. "One of the things I'm working on at the moment is me scripting and illustrating another writer's plot, so it looks certain I'll be splitting my work between the two sides in the next year, writing and drawing in equal measure. And the year beyond that, though I hesitate to plan that far ahead, it seems certain I will write and draw a project of my own."

Although he acknowledges the fact that he could have written and illustrated a solo project at this point, and probably achieved a certain measure of success on the strength of his *Watchmen* reputation, Gibbons first wanted to establish himself as a writer separate to his role as artist. "Once I reach that stage, I'll be happier in the knowledge I've achieved it by my own efforts, not having capitalized on my involvement with Alan Moore."

Having expressed his enjoyment with writing, how does Gibbons rate his work, is he satisfied with it? "Well, enough to send it in, and sufficient to accept the money," he laughs again. "I try to do the very best I can each time I work on a project," he admits, "but I don't think I've yet succeeded in doing something I'm unequivocally happy with. However, writing Superman and Batman, characters I've lived with a long time, was, without wanting to get into psychobabble, a kind of inner journey. I discovered things I wanted to express which I didn't know were there, which was a nice surprise. Also, and I don't want to sound immodest, I was very happy with the dialogue. I knew I could structure a story but was uncertain for a while if I could bring the dialogue to life. If there's anything I'm proud of, and pride's not a particularly admirable quality, I think the dialogue's bloody good!" he admits with an embarrassed laugh. "But objectively, how good or bad it is, is for others to judge.

"I've been writing for nearly two years now—I did *World's Finest* at the end of 1988—and I'm continually learning new things. Every time a notion occurs to me or I find an image that strikes a chord, I jot the details down in a notebook. Some of those notions pertain more to mainstream fiction than comics, some of them are directly related to comics, and there are also a great number of things that are more personal to me, but I don't want to give the impression I've got a great autobiographical novel inside me. I am starting to find, however, that the things that do appeal most for me to write and draw are notions rooted in personal experience." He indicates that is not likely to happen for some time, yet the indication is Gibbons' writing will develop its own identity over the next few years. "Ultimately, I feel I will apply what I know about telling stories to the underlying notions and imagery that I've noticed crop up in my art, follow

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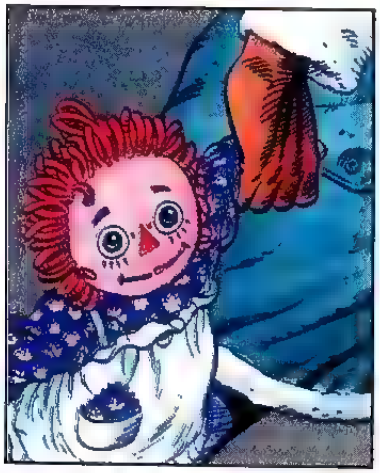
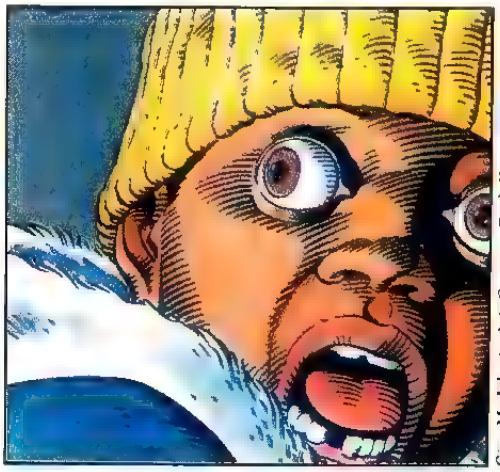
"Martha's story is a quest for survival in the near-future America," he says.





Give Me Liberty Art: Courtesy Dark Horse Comics

Art Dave Gibbons

Screenplay of a Living Dead Man brings *Man-Thing* back from "the edge."

His first is *The Legion of Night*, a two-part bookshelf format series reuniting a number of supporting characters from Marvel's '70s supernatural titles in battle against the monsters of Marvel's early 60s anthologies. The first issue is due in the fall, with art by Whilce Portacio and Scott Williams.

"The genesis of *The Legion of Night* was something that Ralph Macchio proposed in a Marvel editing meeting," Gerber recalls. "They wanted to do something with the old Marvel monster characters: Fin Fang Foom, Groot the Living Toothbrush, whatever the hell, the whole list. The editorial consensus went against Ralph on the project because everybody felt they really couldn't sell an anthology book, let alone one based on the old monsters. Ralph and I happened to discuss the idea and I suggested that maybe it *shouldn't be* an anthology. Maybe it should be a group of continuing characters or a continuing character, who are essentially fighting these monsters on a regular basis. From that grew *The Legion of Night*.

Is Steve Gerber Overworked?

With two titles already on the stands, the prolific writer has a graphic novel and two limited series on the way.

By PATRICK DANIEL O'NEILL

There is nothing I see as making something quintessentially a Steve Gerber story. I've never tried to disguise my style at all when I write for comics. I bring a certain set of sensibilities to the work and don't try to cloak them in something that looks more generic," the veteran writer, creator of Howard the Duck and well-remembered Man Thing scribe, explains.

Whatever it is that makes a Gerber story his own, that quality will be all over the map at Marvel throughout the next few months. In addition to the two series he currently scripts—*She-Hulk* and the Hawkeye feature in *Avengers Spotlight*—Gerber is taking on four other projects.

Man Thing Art: Kevin Nowlan

"At that point, the whole orientation of the project changed," he continues. "Originally, they were thinking about a 'fun' book, meaning, 'We'll do Japanese monster movies and hope somebody's interested.' It rapidly became something else entirely. We've been laughingly referring to *The Legion of Night* as: 'Fin Fang Foom as you've never seen him before.' "

Gerber says readers shouldn't expect a "hoot" with these monsters, explaining that the story is very serious. He says you can look at it as the '50s and '60s monster stories told with a '90s sensibility.

"The premise grew from the question, 'What if we took all this stuff *seriously*. How would it play itself out if we did that?' " Gerber notes. "From there came the idea of combining it with some of the '70s horror characters who hadn't been seen in quite some time. I wanted to put together a group—some in costume, some not—but all with an association with the supernatural. Just by sheer coincidence, many of them seem to be characters I had worked on before. Angel O'Hara's old boy friend [last seen in the *Lilith* series] is one of the characters; the psychic from the old *Son of Satan* series,

Legion Art: Whilce Portacio/Scott Williams

Foolkiller Art: J.J. Birch/Dan Green

Jokingly referred to as "Fin Fang Foom as you've never seen him," Steve Gerber adds that *The Legion of Night* is really "very serious."

***Foolkiller*, according to Gerber, "relates to the superhero genre in the same way as *The Punisher* does."**

Cathy Reynolds; and Jennifer Kale, the young sorceress from *Man-Thing*." Charles Blackwater, the "dead man" who leads the group, is known as Omen.

Also due in October is a Man-Thing graphic novel, *Screenplay of a Living Dead Man*, with full painted art by Kevin Nowlan. The story is a sequel to a tale Gerber told in the *Man-Thing* series some 14 years ago, "Song Cry of the Living Dead Man." It details the second nervous breakdown of Brian Lazarus, mirrored by the emotional empathy of the muck monster. "In the original story, Lazarus had been battered by circumstances—financial, personal,

Legion Art: Whilce Portacio/Scott Williams

Gerber brought back many old faces for *The Legion of Night* including some '70s horror characters who had been absent for some time.

romantic—and had gone over the edge and was redeemed in the very last panel," Gerber points out. "That was an ending I could never quite live with; it was one of the few cases where I felt the page limitations of comics. Had I had another three or four pages, it might have ended quite differently. Instead, I'm taking another 60 pages to end it differently in the graphic novel.

"At the time of the first story, Lazarus was a struggling writer; he has gone on to a TV and film career which has since blown up in his face. The circumstances of that lead him back to the swamp, where he had his last breakdown. If you detect an autobiographical note, it's entirely possible," he chuckles.

Gerber has spent most of his hiatus from comics working in film and television on such series as *Thundarr*. His comparisons between comics and the Hollywood media are not complimentary. "In the past couple of years, I have run screaming from television and film. I don't want *anything* to do with those two media anymore, because of the fact that it's very difficult to do anything good—certainly in TV."

That's a complaint many longtime laborers in the comics vineyard make of their own medium. Gerber laughs again. "I'll tell you something—you don't know what you've got until you lose it," he says. "The fact of the matter is that the creative freedom and ability to express yourself as a writer with an individual style in comics is so much greater than it is in television, certainly—and I think probably even films at this point—that I *couldn't* go back to either of those other two forms, after having experienced comics again. I tried and I couldn't do it."

She-Hulk Art: Dale Keown/Joe Rubinstein

"Dorkham Asylum," a recent title of *She-Hulk*, pokes fun at the *Batman* movie with Nosferata the She-Bat.

Gerber sees the '70s *Man-Thing* as a title ahead of its time,"and I think now it has caught up to its time," he adds. "My writing is better than it was 15 years ago; that I hope, at least, is true. But the actual approach to the character really isn't any different. I think it was done correctly then and—had I been a little more sophisticated at the time—you would have gotten stuff like this graphic novel."

Already in progress is *Foolkiller*, an eight-issue limited series featuring the latest version of a character Gerber introduced in *Man-Thing* in the mid-70s, with art by J.J. Birch. "This is actually the *third* person to take the name Foolkiller," Gerber explains. "The first one is dead—he died in the very first story where he

Cloak & Dagger Art: Rick Leonardi/Joe Rubinstein

There will be no more "Mutant Misadventures" for *Cloak and Dagger* as Gerber, along with artist Rick Leonardi, take a "gritty approach" to the duo.

Although there have been two other versions of *Foolkiller*, the third, Kurt Gerhard, is "one of the most interesting—and terrifying."

appeared, *Man-Thing* #3 and #4. The second Foolkiller is actually a character in this book. He's in a mental institution at the time the story starts—where he was left at the end of the Spider-Man story in which he last appeared. The new character is someone who is more or less inspired by the second Foolkiller. All that is explained in tremendous detail in the first couple of issues."

The three characters have all been slightly different from each other, according to Gerber. "The first was a religious fanatic; the second was sort of an aesthetic fanatic—had a thing about living life as a poem; the third, Kurt Gerhard, is a little more difficult to describe," he says. "His definition of a fool is someone who knowingly acts against his own self-interest. That's probably a pretty good definition, on one level or another. Each version of the character has broadened the definition of a fool a little bit, to the point where this one, if anything, becomes the most frightening of the three. One of the interesting—and terrifying—things about this character is just about anybody could come to the same conclusions he did for the same reasons he did."

To the casual eye, none of these titles is a traditional superhero comic. In a market where the long-johnned characters drive sales, does Gerber truly have hopes for them as commercial successes?

"The Man-Thing book is very definitely not a superhero book, not by any stretch of the imagination," he admits. "*The Legion of Night* is a combination supernatural/superhero book. It's a little of both. *Foolkiller* is an odd one. It relates to the superhero genre in the same way *The Punisher* does. In the same way a character like the Punisher can be successful in today's market—he's not exactly a superhero either—I think any of these books can. Back during the '70s, we found out that the crucial thing for *any* series was the presence of a very strong lead character, superhero or not."

Gerber has a history with Marvel, obviously—a history that hasn't always been marked by good feelings between him and his employers. Still, he has no problems working with Marvel today. "I'm quite comfortable working at Marvel now. All my troubles with them over Howard the Duck got resolved after the case was settled out of court," he remembers. "Most of the kinks in the working relationship pretty much got taken care of while I was working on *Void Indigo* for Epic, back in '85, '86. Over the past couple of years, the editorial philosophy at Marvel has changed a little bit and I am quite comfortable working with the people I'm working with. There is still—and I think people at Marvel would say this, too—a little too much residual influence from what I can diplomatically call the '80s period lurking there. I think they would like to be able to shuck it off, to tell the truth."

As Marvel and the comics industry as a whole have changed in 15 years, so has the Gerber working method. The writer says technology—and experience—have both played a part in those changes. "First of all, I use a computer now, instead of a typewriter," he notes. "I get to do a more polished draft of the work. Literally, most of my stuff for Marvel during the 1970s was first-draft stuff. Part of it was a question of speed: When you're working on a monthly book and you have to come

Legion Art: Whilce Portacio/Scott Williams

All Man-Thing, Legion, Foolkiller, She-Hulk, Cloak & Dagger Art & Characters: Trademark & Copyright 1990 Marvel Entertainment Group

up with a new story for the same characters every 30 days, there is *no way* to even rewrite. It went through the typewriter once, and if something really horrible struck me later, I went in with a marker and blocked it out and scribbled in a change. For the most part, not even that. The way I look at it now, I can do a draft-and-a-half before it even gets to Marvel, because of the computer. Rewriting is a skill I learned in all those years working in television.

"There are 15 years of life experience in the time since I left Marvel and I came back. That has had a tremendous influence on my stuff."

Gerber's most recent return to comics came as a result of a splash of publicity—John Byrne's departure from the writing/drawing chores on *She-Hulk* (CS#5), the circumstances of which are still a point of dispute between Byrne and Marvel. Suffice it to say, Gerber comments, "I took over *She-Hulk* under less than the best of circumstances. John Byrne had been pushing the deadline as far as it would go without being late at the time he left it. Probably if John had continued, he would have been able to keep it at that point and the crisis situation that has developed around that book for the past year would not have gone on. It was a terrible situation from that point of-view."

A further problem was that Gerber was, basically, an unknown quantity to many *She-Hulk* readers, taking on a book that had been headlined by a true fan favorite. "There was also, obviously, a tremendous loyalty among John's fans and coming in after him on *any* book is a little bit difficult," Gerber admits. "We had to break in a brand-new artist Brian Hitch—who was faced with the problem of how to maintain the continuity without copying John's approach or his style. It was not ideal in many ways."

Like Gerber's popular series of the '70s, *Howard the Duck* (which Gerber discussed in STARLOG #111) *She-Hulk* is a humor/satire title—and Gerber knows from experience that simulating another writer's sense of humor is virtually impossible. "My style of humor is very different from John's—and that was a decision I had to make when I took over the book," he recalls. "It would have been useless for me to try to imitate John Byrne. It would have been as silly as what people did on *Howard the Duck* 15 years ago, trying to imitate *my* style.

"I took an approach that was much more natural to me, closing the fourth wall and doing the stories as real comic book stories, but askew, tilted on their sides a little. I'm happy with it, I think it works, and most of the readers are coming around."

Both Byrne and Gerber found *She-Hulk*'s humor in the numerous conventions of superhero comics, conventions that Gerber says he will continue to skewer. "I should say, right from the start, I really hated the *Batman* movie. So, we're doing two issues, #19-#20, that will introduce Nosferata the She-Bat -named after the very first movie vampire. I don't want to tell you too much about the story, except to say that Brian's art job is exceptional. His version of the city Nosferata operates in Visigoth, Massachusetts—is absolutely hysterical. The character herself is really funny, her origin is really funny. We've got satirical versions of a number of Batman villains, not just the Joker—and they're all funny. We tried to poke as many holes in both the movie and the Bathysteria that followed it as we possibly could."

A three-part story, a mini-series within a series, called "The Return of the Blonde Phantom," will follow, Gerber notes. "This one is really a lot of fun; it deals with the savings & loan crisis, a stolen atomic bomb, a guest appearance of the All-Winners Squad and a Reed Richards cameo. Those three issues will be done by Tom Artis, in order to give Brian a chance to get caught up. They are in no way fill ins; they are part of the continuity. Brian and I are continuing to work, so we can essentially do five issues in the time it usually takes for three. By then, we *may* be able to get caught up on the book, so we can breathe for the first time in a year."

"*The Legion of Night* is a combination supernatural/superhero book," explains Gerber.

Duck Art: Gene Colan/Copyright 1978 Marvel Comics Group

Gerber's past relationship with Marvel hasn't always been a happy one. However, he's comfortable working there now and says, "All my troubles over Howard the Duck got resolved."

To paraphrase an old show-business remark, superheroes are easy, comedy is hard, according to Gerber. "Each book I write has its own peculiar problems," he says, "but *She-Hulk* is without a doubt the most difficult thing I'm working on. Also the most fun—but it's a challenge every time. I feel a real obligation to be very original on that book, to do things people haven't seen before, to make them laugh in a way that they're not made to laugh by cheap teen movie comedies or bad TV sitcoms; to do a style of humor that's a little more respectful of the audience. I take *She-Hulk* very seriously, even though it's the humor book."

Speaking of superheroes, Gerber also controls the life of Marvel's ace archer, Hawkeye and has recently sent the hero on a campaign against Los Angeles' street gangs and drug runners. Why put an Avenger into such a gritty environment?

"First of all, Hawkeye doesn't really have any superpowers, so trying to put him in a cosmic storyline or out there fighting Dr. Doom really made no sense," Gerber replies. "Second, most of the stories that had been running in *Avengers Spotlight*

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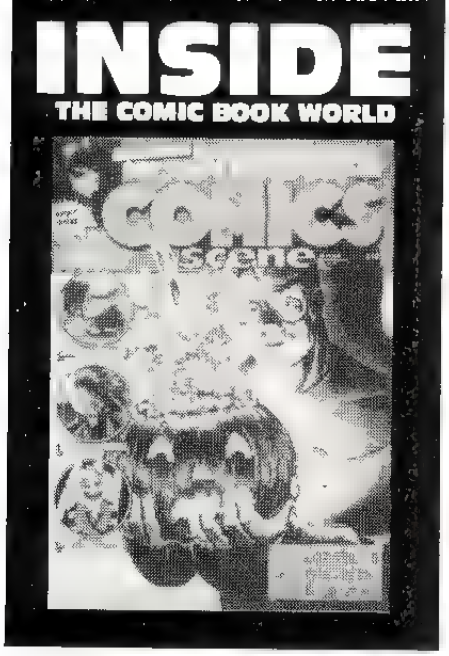

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Gibbons

(continued from page 18)

them back to their routes and put down something that's less abstracted from the experiences that have caused them. As you excavate personal experience, you discover the stories you want to tell."

If this all sounds like Dave Gibbons is going to move away from comics, fear not. He emphasizes comics are his medium and storywise, he has no desire to become self-absorbed or self-indulgent. "It's a question of exploring experiences to discover their essence and then use that human essence to bring a plot to life. I don't want to write comics that are glum or unentertaining. Storytelling is entertainment; whatever else emerges should be secondary to exciting the reader in an effective and stylized manner.

"I find comics eternally satisfying," he continues. "I love the fact that you can sit at home with a piece of paper and create something other people can follow without you needing an army of technicians to create it. Comics come straight from your head onto the paper, that's why they are so endlessly fascinating. I would love to have a go at storyboarding a film—in fact I'm game to try many things, but at the same time I don't like the idea that you can spend weeks working on something only to have it all end up in the garbage because the producer has cut the scene. Really, radio's an interesting interactive medium because you're stimulating the listener's imagination. As far as prose is concerned, writing comics is fun because you can come up with lots of bold, exciting stuff, knowing you're not the poor bastard who has to make it appear!" he adds, giving a hearty laugh, probably thinking of all the work he had to do on *Watchmen* following Alan Moore's detailed scripts, which usually ran to 120 pages per 32-page installment.

An area he does find particularly interesting is computer graphics. "Computer games have a lot of potential and I have some contacts with a few software companies who are intrigued at the idea of using the imagery I can come up with. In many ways, the best computer games aren't that far removed from comic scenarios, and in the future I see the two becoming ever more interactive, a thought I find quite attractive. But there's so much more that can be done with comics," says Dave Gibbons. "I feel we've only just scratched the surface and that's the most exciting notion." CS

Gerber

(continued from page 23)

were what I call 'costume vs. costume' stories. One costume shows up, another costume shows up and they beat each other up—without a whole lot of story substance."

He admits, though, that the attempt hasn't been a complete success. "I wanted to get more deeply into Hawkeye's character than that, find out what made him tick. I've been very frustrated with it. Of all the stuff I've done, it's the least favorite, partly because I didn't feel I went far enough with it.

"The difficulty with this book really comes from the fact that there's so much continuity to deal with in a character like Hawkeye," he continues. "His past is so well-known, so well-documented and goes back so far and has so many details and ramifications—and the fact that he appears in another book on a regular basis—that making really major changes in the character was impossible. It wasn't a situation like what Frank Miller had with Daredevil, where the character appeared in one book and that was it; you could do almost anything as long as it didn't violently contradict the earlier continuity. Hawkeye has a long tradition, a long history, and I didn't want to violate it. I wanted to explore another side of it. It's one of the few cases where I can actually cop to being too conservative in my approach."

He'll also be taking on the scripting chores on *Cloak and Dagger*, beginning with #14, aided by art from Rick Leonardi. "Again, we're taking a sort of gritty approach, as was done in their earlier series," he says. "The editor, Danny Fingeroth, has the perfect tagline. We've dropped the 'Mutant Misadventures' from the title, and Danny's proposed advertising line is 'The misadventures are over. Now the terror begins.' That's a good description of what we're doing with the book: They'll be coming up against a mystical neo-Nazi group in my first issue, based on the actual Hitlerian occult beliefs."

In addition, Gerber is doing editorial consultant work for TSR's line of role-playing game-related comics. That seems like an overfilled plate for any writer—so now we can ask Gerber that frequently posed question that heads this profile: Is Steve Gerber overworked?

"It's a good thing you didn't ask that question first; this could have been the shortest interview in the history of comics," he laughs. "I can answer that one in one word—yes!"

In a war drenched in watercolors, George Pratt revives the Hammer of Hell.

Aces High

By FRANZ HENKEL

You probably remember him: the gaunt-faced German aviator with those cold and precise eyes behind the yammering Spandaus, his almost anthropomorphic crimson Fokker triplane, his silent walks in the Black Forest with his only friend, the black wolf. Yes, America's favorite WWI enemy, Hans Von Hammer, "The Hammer from Hell" is back, this time in breathtaking watercolors that do a cinematic justice to the harsh, ethereal beauty of the skies above the front and the mud-caked wasteland of the trenches below. This is *Enemy Ace: War Idyll*, painted and written by George Pratt.

At last year's San Diego Comic Book Convention, Pratt had a table at the far corner of the wall that he and his friends, artists Kent Williams, Jon J. Muth and Scott Hampton, had reserved. Pratt had brought samples of his work, including the original of his *Batman Annual* cover (which people kept replacing upside-down) and his *Doc Savage* cover, but what drew the most attention, by far, was Pratt's portfolio book filled with reproductions of his pages from the forthcoming *Enemy Ace* graphic novel.

Another artist walked away from the table, saying, "Damn shame he's gonna have to put word balloons over that art."

Like the record-breaking *Arkham Asylum* graphic novel, this one will be a 128-page, hardback book with a hefty $25 cover price. But unlike the mixed media look of *Arkham*, the *Enemy Ace* graphic novel will be fully painted in watercolor, and Pratt is lobbying to get some other changes as well. He would like the pages to be sewn, not glued like *Arkham*, and he would like a thicker paper stock to make the book seem more substantial.

"One of the big problems with *Arkham* was psychological," notes Pratt. "When people got ahold of that book, it was so thin they felt they weren't getting their money's worth, although when you look through the book, there's a lot of work in it."

Another, by now notorious, problem with *Arkham* is that the pages tend to fall out when the reader opens it to appreciate all those layouts that bleed into the gutter. But Pratt's work should avoid this problem even if the book doesn't get a sewn binding.

"In *Arkham*, the pages were mostly full bleeds. There are a few of those in *Enemy Ace*, but usually, if I had one page bleed, the page next to it would have borders. I didn't use a whole ton of double-page spreads, either. There are a few single splash pages, but on the average, I was doing a very tightly-paneled story. Some pages have up to 11 panels."

If one considers the fact that each of those panels is technically a *separate* watercolor painting, it's almost an understatement to call Pratt's work a labor of love, considering the staggering amount of time that went into it.

Pratt was initially uncertain about which medium he would apply to *Enemy Ace*. "When I first came up with it," he recalls, "I really didn't know how I would approach the project. The longest thing I had ever done—really the *only* complete story I had ever done—was an eight-pager for *Heavy Metal* in pen-and-ink. So, I thought about doing *Enemy Ace* in pen-and-ink, and I decided I couldn't keep my interest up long enough in that medium. I had envisioned it as a four-issue mini-series, but DC decided to combine it all into

one big book, *Enemy Ace: War Idyll*."

It was hearing about Kent Williams' and Jon Muth's watercolor work for *Blood* and *Moonshadow* that gave Pratt the idea of using watercolors himself. At first, he tried a combination of watercolors over pen-and-ink, but found it dissatisfying.

Since he does most of his gallery work in the same medium, watercolors seemed natural and comfortable to Pratt. "Watercolors just happen," he says. "I don't have to struggle with them. I can just sit down and put out watercolors and feel good about them and be very confident with them." Whatever doubts Pratt had about his ability to fully paint such a major project were relieved when he helped Jon Muth meet his deadline by finishing some of Muth's *Moonshadow* pages.

"Jon said, 'Well, it's going to be fully painted, but I've got it all sketched out in pencil already.' So, I took the train upstate. His idea of pencils was like these little doodle things with little arrows pointing to them that said, 'Moonshadow.'" Pratt laughs. "I was like, 'Oh, *man*! This is trial by fire.' But I really surprised myself and was able to do it. If it wasn't for helping Jon on *Moonshadow*, I don't think I would have had the confidence to go through with *Enemy Ace*."

Pratt originally submitted his proposal to DC almost two-and-a-half years ago while he was doing gallery work in New York to support himself. Ironically, although he is a great Enemy Ace fan, Pratt doesn't remember exactly *why* the character had such a strong appeal for him. "I can't even tell you why Enemy Ace popped into my head," he says. "I was actually writing another thing that I had shown to Marvel, and they had seemed somewhat interested in this other project. Then, for some reason, I started doing sketches of Enemy Ace.

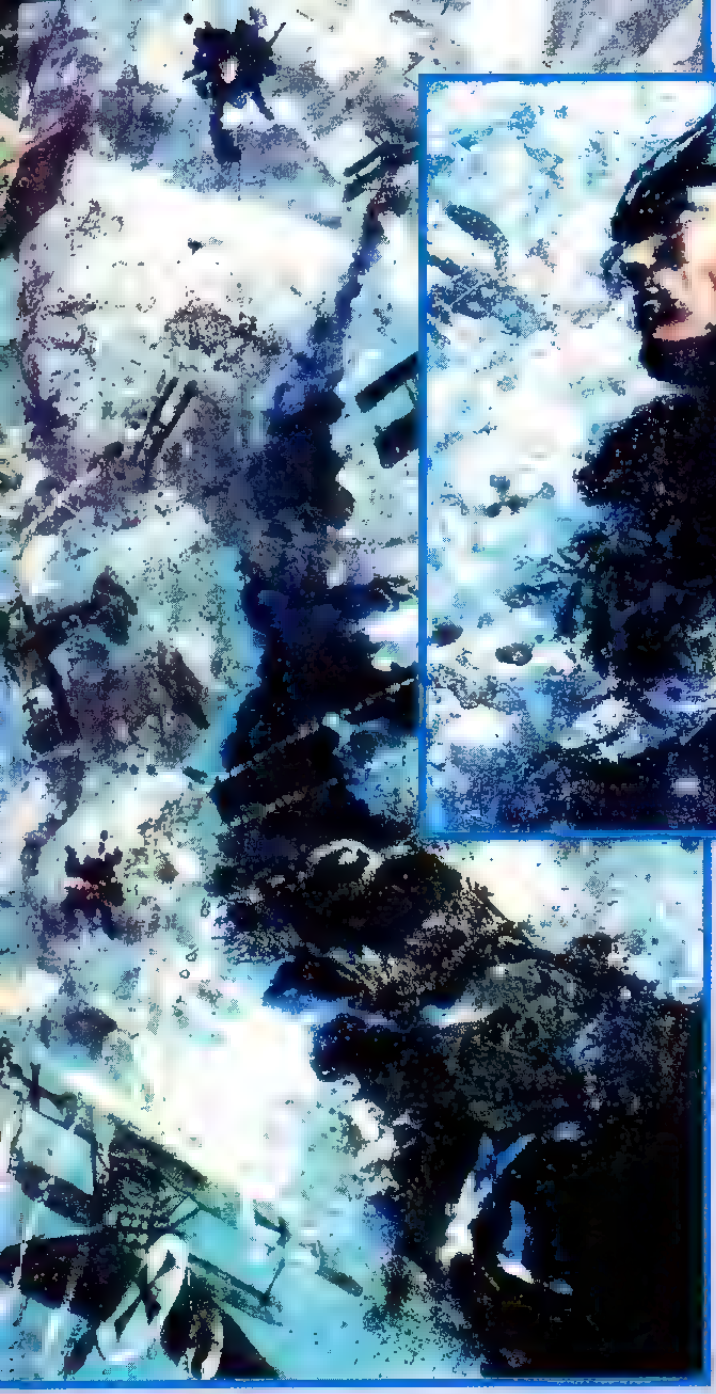
"I really don't know where it came from. I used to read it when I was a kid. He's one of the characters that I really used to be into, with *Sgt. Rock* and all those war comics, but all that stuff was in Texas; I didn't have any of the comics up here [in New York] with me. I just started sketching with it and got this...." Pratt actually finds himself at a loss for words. "I don't know," he says finally. "I *really* wanted to do the story."

The underlying reason for his selection of Enemy Ace, the writer/artist speculates, was due to his reaction to the Vietnam War. Before doing gallery work, Pratt had freelanced for *Eagle* (a publication that covered Vietnam War-related issues) to support himself after college. "When I was a kid, it really used to flip me out, and I would wake up having nightmares that I was going to get sent to Vietnam," Pratt reflects with some amusement. "You know the stuff on TV at that time? I was trying to understand it. I was reading many books about Vietnam, and the *Eagle* magazine thing came along at a great time, but they folded, and I still felt that I hadn't gotten to say what I wanted to say about the subject."

Pratt was able to come up with a thematic device that allowed him to make a statement about Vietnam in the process of telling the Enemy Ace story. "I saw *Enemy Ace* as a way to revive an interesting old character and say something about war at the same time. I really couldn't believe that DC would let me do it the way I wanted to handle it, with the things I wanted to do in it. In a way, Von Hammer is such an obscure character. For the average comic fan, he's pretty esoteric, but he has his own neat little following."

Indeed, for those who remember the original Enemy Ace stories in *Star-Spangled War Stories* and *Showcase*, *Enemy Ace: War Idyll* will prove to be a rather unexpected twist in the Von Hammer saga. Pratt has reservations about revealing too much of the story, but he acquiesces to give a brief synopsis.

"It takes place in 1968 or '69. Possibly '69, because I'm trying to have it coincide with the My Lai Massacre—when that actually became known and when the photos started to appear in the media. Basically, it's about a journalist who reported on Vietnam and who finds out that Von Hammer has turned up.



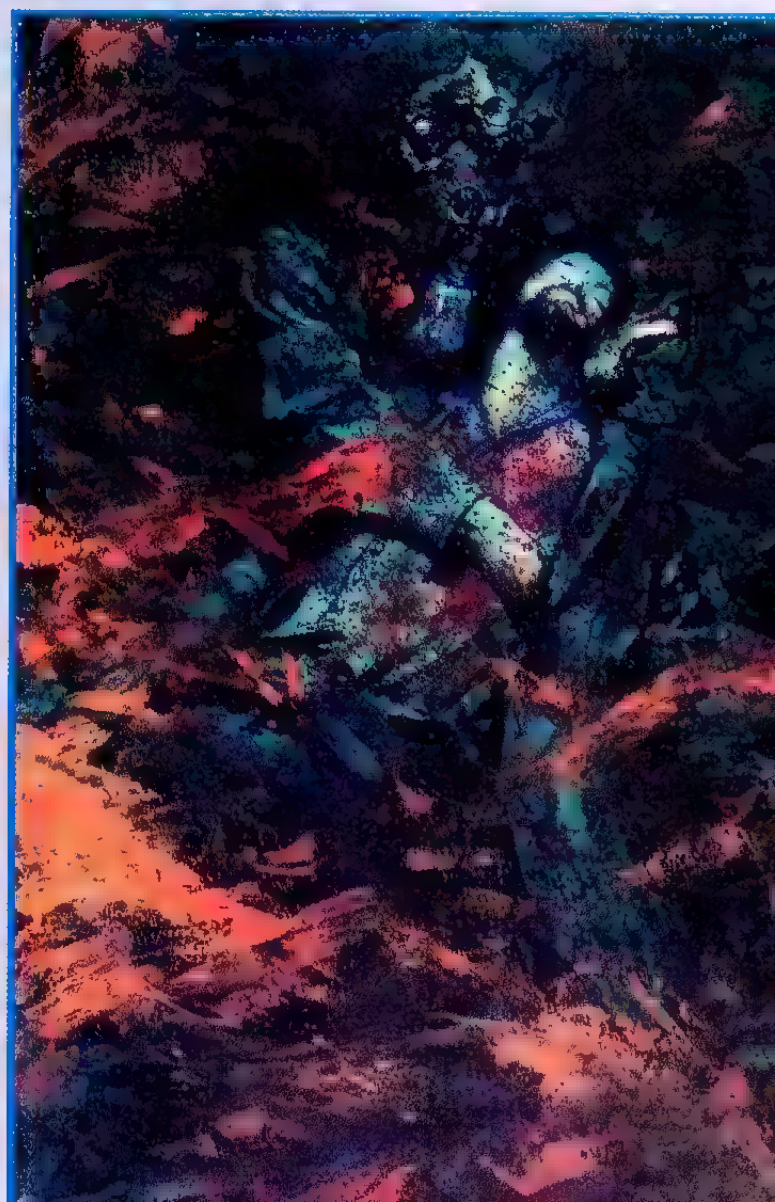
"I saw *Enemy Ace* as a way to revive an interesting old character," adds Pratt, "and say something about the war at the same time."

strong code of honor that he would apply to his flying—things like 'Don't shoot an unarmed opponent.' He had internalized all these ideals characteristic of that time, but slowly, it all breaks down. He finally begins to realize that war is *not* just these romantic attitudes; it starts to take on a reality for him beyond this whole romantic fantasy. It's not just shooting down machines anymore. He had been able to handle it that way—he was shooting down planes, and the men were something else. He could blame it on the sky. You know the line from Bob Kanigher's original stories: 'The sky is the killer of us all.' But slowly, through what happens to him in World War I, we see a breakdown of all that idealism into an aversion and hatred of what he was having to do.

"Then, Von Hammer gets shot down, and he finally sees what the Von Hammer is one of his childhood heroes of World War I. The reporter finds out that this old man has appeared, and he tracks Von Hammer down to interview him about his life, but also to try to find out how to deal with some of the things he saw in Vietnam.

George Pratt re-emphasizes Bob Kanigher's words from the original Enemy Ace stories—"The sky is the killer of us all."

"Von Hammer is in a sanitarium—he's sick. As the reporter interviews him, we get flashbacks of the little things that made him change his attitudes about war: How was this old man able to go through everything he went through and come out a whole, seemingly mentally healthy person? Von Hammer talks about how, during the First World War, he was a Prussian aristocrat with a very idealized notion of what war was all about. It was this honorable thing, king and country. He had a very



His wings clipped, Von Hammer discovers the true meaning of war.

All Enemy Ace: War Idyll Art: George Pratt All Enemy Ace Art Trademark & Copyright 1990 DC Comics Inc

The artist doesn't have much faith in the current comic audience. "I think the superhero people are not going to pick it up, anyway," he says ruefully.

war's about. He has to face the reality of the trench life—the gassings, the piles of bodies, people just getting slaughtered—actually having to get your hands dirty. It isn't just the sky. Not that flying wasn't harrowing, but it was still a very antiseptic kind of war for the flyers. They had great food, they could go back home, chill out, put on the music, have some wine—you know, really relax, even though the average lifespan of the pilot out on the front was about two weeks. So, Von Hammer finally does get to see what the real shit is, and it radically changes how he thinks about the war and how he perceives everything.

"We also have shots of Vietnam as well, and some of what the reporter went through. It's interesting how the two wars, in some ways, were really similar and in other ways were so radically different. *Enemy Ace* is really intended to be an anti-war book, and I hope it comes across. It's *not* a glorification of what happened in either war. It's something that shows what these men go through, about what happens when you take a normal human being and put him in an abnormal situation—how it twists him and plays with him."

If Von Hammer's adventures do find an audience, Pratt may continue the story into WWII and Enemy Ace's involvement in the plot to assassinate Hitler.

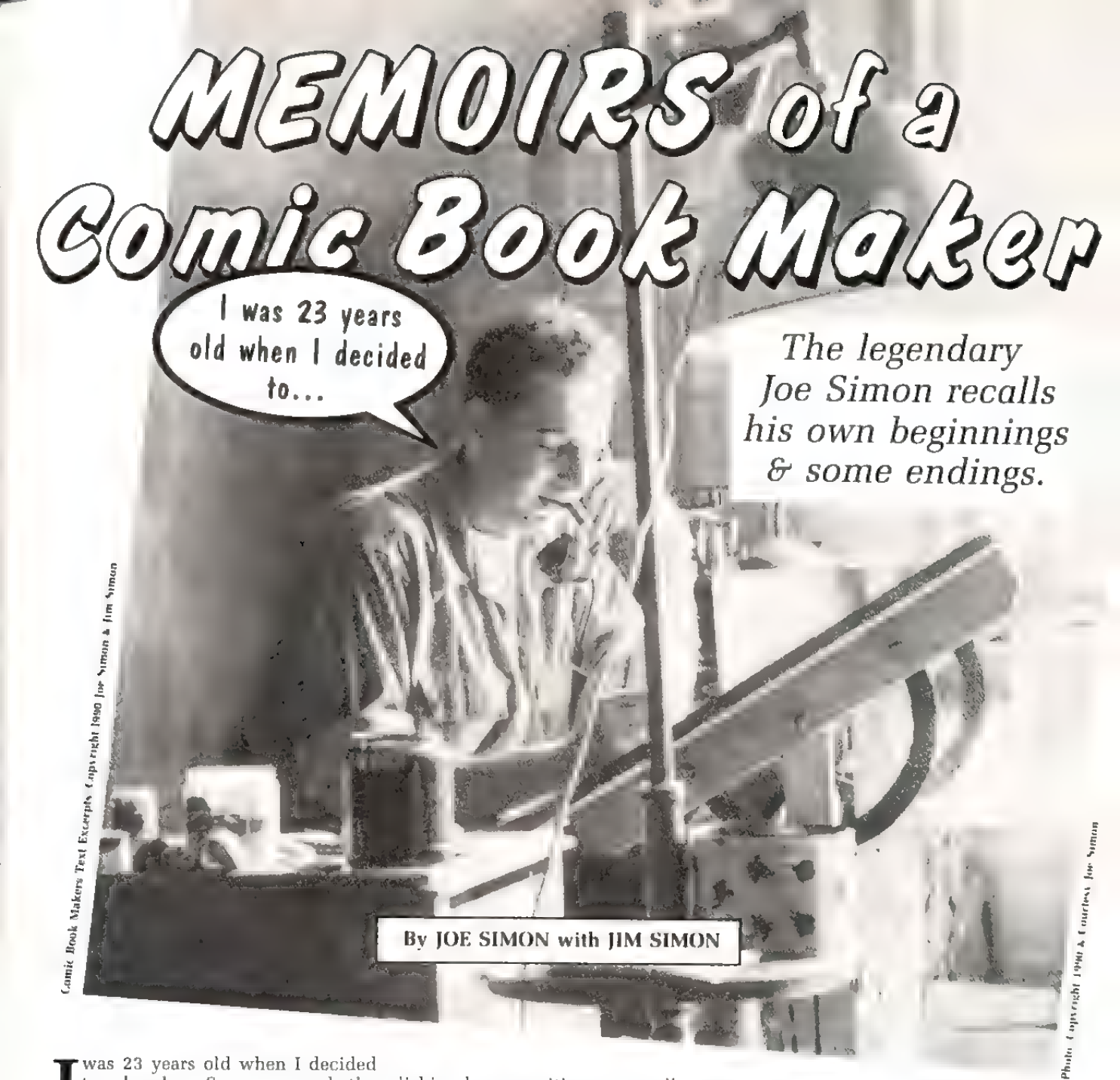
Because of the themes and the unusual realism of the story, Pratt is not sure how the typical superhero fan will respond to his Enemy Ace tale. "I don't know," he says. "They may just be totally bored out of their minds. I did *Enemy Ace* because I love it and wanted to tell a story, but I really don't know how the typical comic book audience is going to take it. The big joke, I guess, with the people up at DC is, 'Why don't you throw Batman in the last few pages, and we'll sell a *million* of these things!'" Pratt laughs. "Then, people would take it seriously.

"But *Enemy Ace* is a story that's realistic. I try not to pull any punches. There's no big glory, it's more 'This is what it's like. This is real, and this is what happens to people. This is how people live and die.'"

George Pratt's emphasis on realism extends beyond the book's storyline. In order to get a legitimate feel

(continued on page 60)

MEMOIRS of a Comic Book Maker



The legendary Joe Simon recalls his own beginnings & some endings.

Comic Book Makers Text Excerpts Copyright 1990 Joe Simon & Jim Simon

Photo Copyright 1990 & Courtesy Joe Simon

By JOE SIMON with JIM SIMON

I was 23 years old when I decided to abandon Syracuse and the newspaper work I did there for the big time—New York City.

First, I bought a new, shiny leather portfolio to hold my cartoon and illustration samples. This small sign of affluence would, I believed, stamp me as a successful artist. So armed, I started out making the rounds of publishing houses.

Art editors set aside one afternoon a week, customarily Wednesdays, to look at samples. A secretary or apprentice art editor would screen the samples first, dismissing the incompetent to avoid wasting the big chief's time, or in truth depriving him of the pleasure of insulting the poor peons who waited around for hours in a stuffy, windowless room.

On Wednesday afternoons, in publishing house waiting rooms all over New York City, artists would recog nize familiar faces again and again.

One grizzled old practitioner sat staring at me, smiling as if he were seeing his own past.

"Just out of school?" he asked.

"No...I've been working a few years."

"New in town, right?" he persisted.

"More or less. Does it show?" I was losing confidence.

"Half of these idiots don't know good art from bad," he said. "They're just kids or goddamn secretaries."

"So.. ?"

"So these asses look at your spanking new patent leather portfolio and they got you pegged as a beginner. A rank amateur, buddy." He kept puffing away at a Turkish cigarette. My eyes went to the large manila envelope the old man held between his legs. The corners were bent flat. It was splattered with paint stains. I could swear I recognized some mustard. Beneath all those stains, his name and address were lettered quite artistically, but that could have happened decades ago. He pointed at one streak that ran vertically down the edge. "Piss," he grinned through brown teeth. "I get plenty of work because of this piss." I thanked him. Another trick-of-the-trade mastered.

The following Wednesday afternoon, I fitted my samples into a large manila envelope which I had carefully smudged to give it a "don't-give-a-damn" look. It must have convinced someone. At Macfadden Publications,

HANS HAVERLICK
SYRACUSE'S ADOPTED HEAVY AIRS HIS VIEWS ON MR. PASTOR BETWEEN SPARRING PARTNERS AT BRADY'S GYM... HANS WORKS HARDER IN TRAINING THAN MOST BOXERS WORK IN THE RING.
"I WILL SET HIM UP FOR THE KILL WITH MY LEFT- IT WILL BE EASY..!"
"I SPARRED WITH PASTOR WHEN HE TRAINED FOR LOUIS - HE COULD NOT HIT ME..!"
BOB PASTOR
IF YOU LISTEN TO HANS, THE HIGH RANKING NEW YORKER IS A LITTLE SHORT OF A BAT-BOY IN THE INTERNATIONAL LEAGUE
SIMON

Before seeking his fortune in the big city, Joe Simon was an illustrator for the Rochester and Syracuse newspapers.

Art Joe Simon All Art Courtesy Joe Simon

I hit a little pay dirt.

Macfadden published a quality line of slick magazines including *True Story* and a wide assortment of specialized publications.

I was passed through the "screening idiots" to Harlan Crandall, their suave, personable art editor. He assigned me to do small illustrations and "spot" drawings of kitchen utensils, furniture, women's hair styles, guns. The purpose of these little spots was to decorate raw type pages so they wouldn't be boring. The work was freelance. I always delivered the job a day or two after the assignment.

"You work pretty fast," Harlan observed.

I explained that speed was a necessity for newspaper work.

"There's a new art field opening up," Harlan said. "Comic books. It might be right up your alley."

Funnies Incorporated was in a tired, walk-up office building on West 45th Street, off Times Square. It had worn, concave marble steps and a dimly lit hall. The neighborhood was run down. I wondered how many more years the row of buildings would stand. The company offices consisted of two large rooms dotted with shirt-sleeved artists, bare wood floors and a very large stained table on which ink bottles and paint jars fought for space with piles of cardboard drawings.

In a corner, huddled over an ancient typewriter, a husky, gruff-looking youth identified himself as a writer and editor. His name was Mickey Spillane. A smaller office was the domain of Lloyd Jacquet, a pleasant, reserved man in his 40s.

"Call me Lloyd." He puffed hard on a straight ramrod of a pipe. "Harlan Crandall phoned about you.

"We put together comics for publishers," he continued. "They don't want to hire an editorial staff, so we do that for them. We have several different publishers that take our work. If they like yours—story and artwork -you'll be paid $7 a page. Since each feature runs about six pages, you'll get $42 for each accepted feature soon after publication."

For now, the deal he offered was worth a try. I went home to my room and worked for two days and nights on my first venture, a seven-page Western. It was not memorable, but it was accepted without changes by the faceless publisher.

This all had taken place in four days and when I dropped by to see Lloyd Jacquet, he was extremely cordial. "I've got another assignment for you. One of our biggest clients, Martin Goodman. He saw your stuff and liked it."

Even more than money, an artist likes to be loved

Jacquet explained: "Goodman's got a character called 'The Human Torch.' Roughly, it's about this guy who was set on fire and then learned the secret of turning himself into a flaming torch to fight evildoers. It's quite successful and Goodman wants you to do a character like it."

Jacquet showed me a copy of *Marvel Comics*. The drawings were simple but the flaming color of the hero made it effective.

"How much like it?" I asked.

"Well, basically," said Jacquet, "all you have to do is make up a character that can set himself on fire."

"And survive," I muttered.

"We live in a world of fantasy," Jacquet apologized.

"It doesn't sound too difficult."

"Oh yes," Jacquet added. "And he *must* wear a mask. All the heroes should wear masks."

Meeting a demand for new adventure titles, Simon says he produced "some of the best work ever done in comic books" with friends cajoled from other firms like Al Williamson on *Blast Off* and Jack Kirby on *Race for the Moon*.

THE SPACE COURT
PLEASE, PLEASE, YOU MUST BELIEVE ME! I WAS THE ONE SCIENTIST ON EARTH THEY WANTED HOME WITH YOU TO THROW SAND IN THE WORKS OF THEIR INVASION PLANS! I'M YOUR FRIEND!
I WAS WORN OUT, EXHAUSTED! NOTHING IN SCIENCE OR FICTION HAD TAUGHT ME HOW TO DEAL WITH AN ALIEN COURT! I DON'T KNOW WHAT HAPPENED
THE JUDGE RETURNING TO HIS BENCH, PRESSES A BUTTON, A BEAM OF ENERGY STRIKES THE PRISONER
BEEP
BEEP
I'M NOT TOTALLY IN THE WRONG, I'LL APPEAL!

Blast-Off #1 Art Al Williamson

THE THREE ROCKETEERS in
THE LONG LONG YEARS
CAPTAIN BILL MASON
HERE COMES THE PRISON SHIP I'M BRINGING IN! THE BIG SHOT!
SGT. BEEFY BROWN
FIGURES, FARADAY
SPACE PLATOON 2
ONE DAY, I HAD TO HAVE IN MIND SOMETHING I THOUGHT OF RUNNING A PRISON ON THE MOON, I MEAN, EVERY MUSIC MAESTRO IS ANNUAL THE BIG SHOT IS THE LATEST FISH TO BE BROUGHT TO MINE PLATOON 2 ON HIS WAY TO CONFINEMENT ON THE MOON
SO, THAT'S THE BIG SHOT. THE GUY WHO RAN THE INTERNATIONAL CRIME SYNDICATE
HE WON'T BE RUNNING ANYTHING FOR THE NEXT TEN
DURING HIS SHORT STAY ON MY PLATOON, BEFORE THIS SHOT IS PUT IN A CELL IN SECTION A, WHERE SERGEANT BEEFY BROWN IS IN CHARGE
I'M NOT HARD TO DEAL WITH, I'M JUST DOING MY JOB. SHOOT ALL YOU WANT TO, BUT BEHAVE WHILE YOU'RE HERE
WHY DON'T YOU GO RUN OUT A TORPEDO OR SOMETHING

Race for the Moon#3 Art Jack Kirby

THE GREEN SORCERESS IS NO DIFFERENT TO DOCTOR BERTOFF'S PHILOSOPHY....SHE FINDS THE BLITZKRIEG AN INTERESTING SUBJECT FOR THOUGHT....THE THIRST FOR POWER ONCE MORE STIRS WITHIN HER--
DOCTOR BERTOFF'S LITTLE DEMONSTRATION TODAY HAS BEEN MOST ENLIGHTENING...THIS DICTATOR'S FORMULA FOR CONQUEST HAS MANY INTRIGUING FEATURES! I WONDER IF ITS METHODS WOULD BRING THE SAME SUCCESSFUL RESULTS IF THEY WERE APPLIED TO THE...GREEN ARMY?
LATE THAT NIGHT-THE SORCERESS COMMUNICATES WITH GOVERNMENTAL HEADQUARTERS IN THE GREEN KINGDOM... VIA A SECRET MICRO-WAVE TRANSMITTER!
ATTENTION...WAVE STATION... ZT--7... SUMMON GENERAL LHOKAR IMMEDIATELY AND GIVE HIM THIS MESSAGE... YOUR EMPRESS COMMANDS..
IN A COMMUNO-ROOM SOMEWHERE IN THE GREEN EMPIRE-GENERAL LHOKAR REPLIES TO HIS QUEEN.
CONVEY MY RESPECTS TO HER MAJESTY... TELL HER THAT OPERATIONS WILL BEGIN AT ONCE!
GENERAL LHOKAR FOLLOWING HIS QUEEN'S INSTRUCTIONS...BEGINS TO RESTORE THE GREEN ARMY TO ITS FORMER MIGHT...
5

Blue Bolt Art Jack Kirby & Joe Simon

Funnies Inc. was the first company to team Simon and Kirby as they chronicled the adventures of Blue Bolt.

How the publisher obtained my phone number was a mystery, although I suspect some employee or hanger-on at Funnies Incorporated was selling the firm's talent list.

Goodman's Timely Publications was located on West 42nd Street, in what was then the McGraw-Hill building. The offices were business-like and unpretentious.

The business was growing. Established publishing companies were setting up comic departments with their own in-house editors. A major part of the editor's job was to seek out capable and experienced comic book artists and spirit them away from their current clients. There were several reasons for the shortage of comic book artists: first, the pay was too low for the amount of work involved; second, few artists were able or willing to create characters, write scripts, do the lettering and perform all the services involved.

Martin Goodman was of medium size and spoke softly. A pleasant-looking man, he was in his early 30s, already sporting a head of prematurely white hair. It was rumored that he had not continued past the fourth grade in school, yet he was an amazingly astute businessman with an uncanny sense of what the public would buy on the newsstands. Like so many of the publishers in his class, he had come up through the ranks of the circulation departments.

Art for Syndicated Phantom Character Copyright 1990 King Features

The daily strips provided ready-made comics that just needed repackaging which included a "ghosted" cover (by Simon) aping the creator's style. In this case, Lee Falk's Phantom got Simonized.

That evening I sat in my room ready for work. A drawing board rested against an end table. I surveyed the scene: a pen, a pencil, a small pointed sable brush, a bottle of india ink, a jar of white tempera, a package of illustration board, and a stack of erasers. The character I created was called "The Fiery Mask." His eyes had the power of a flame thrower. The feature went 10 pages and again it was accepted without changes. I was amazed. It was so easy, this work.

There seemed no end to it. The pattern was to first invent a hero. And after that, to write the story. Complicated plotting wasn't necessary. Few publishers read the copy. They were interested in exciting graphics and action.

The drawings evolved into a stock format. Simplifying the artwork was the most difficult job. Slits for eyes, unless the character was to register astonishment or horror—and then the eyes became circles. Heavier lines for the eyebrows, raised for bewilderment, slanting down toward the nose for anger. One thin line formed the upper lip. A heavier line, indicating a shadow, constituted the lower lip. It wasn't necessary to draw an open mouth when the character was speaking. Almost always, our comic people spoke through clenched lips.

There was a message for me waiting with the desk clerk when I came downstairs one afternoon. It read: "Please call Martin Goodman at Timely Publications."

Art Joe Simon/Harvey Comics

Some creators maintained control over the "new" comics –among them Ham Fisher who, with his Joe Palooka, warred with Al Capp and Li'l Abner.

Although he gave the impression of being a shy and introverted man, Goodman wasted no time in making his point.

"How much are they paying you at Funnies?"

"Seven dollars a page." I paused, then added, "There's other work around for $10, though." (If there was, I hadn't seen it.)

"I'll pay you $12."

I asked what he wanted me to do.

"Just do comic books. Come up with new ideas. This business is getting competitive and we can't keep putting out this crap for very long."

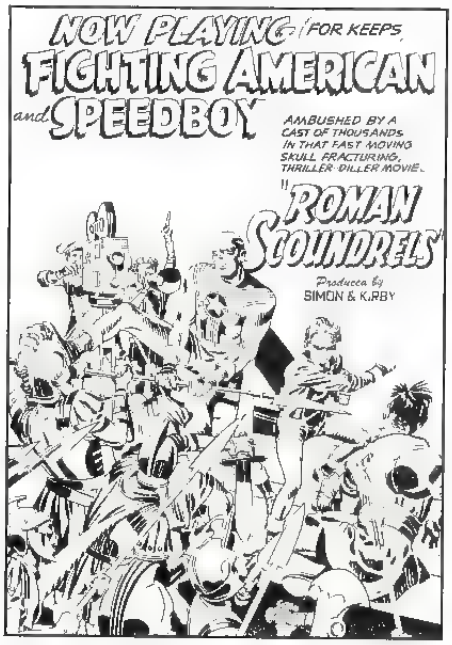
This was the one time I knew him to be wrong.

It was 1957. My friend Al Harvey said he was glad to have me join his company, Harvey Publications. I soon went to work turning out a new line of adventure comics.

The industry was once again engaging in a frenzy of new titles set off by some wild tip or distributor's perception that the time was ripe for more adventure titles.

My assignment was to turn out six new titles on a regular bi-monthly basis, starting out without one solitary artist or writer. The only solution was to steal and cajole talent from other publishers.

My friends, among the best in the business, came through for me. The artists were Jack Kirby, George Tuska, Bill Draut, Bob Powell, Al Williamson, Angelo Torres, John Severin, Carl Burgos and Wally Wood, a convert from *Mad*.


NOW PLAYING FOR KEEPS
FIGHTING AMERICAN
and SPEEDBOY
AMBUSHED BY A CAST OF THOUSANDS IN THAT FAST MOVING SKULL FRACTURING, THRILLER-DILLER MOVIE-
"ROMAN SCOUNDRELS"
Produced by SIMON & KIRBY

With Atlas' revival of the team's character Captain America, Simon and Kirby went back to the drawing board, unleashing the satirical Fighting American

Incredibly, we were meeting schedules, turning out good, quality products –until the day Leon Harvey requested a meeting of the artists. Wally Wood showed up first. Leon, who was billed as executive editor, placed some of Wally's art pages on his very large desk in his very large office, placed a sheet of tracing paper over each board, and picked up a red crayon. That's when I knew we were in trouble.

As Wally looked on in utter disbelief, Leon, with a swish and a flourish of his crayon, proceeded to give drawing lessons to one of the most accomplished artists in the history of comics.

Odd as it might sound, I understood what Leon was trying to convey—that a figure in the air or in space should be surrounded by blank space, not overlapping any background object. He wanted heavier outlines on foreground drawings, receding to thinner lines for back grounds. Action scenes were to come forward toward the reader and be transitional from one panel to the next. His ideas were basically sound animation devices. Unfortunately, his attempts at drawing were so pathetic, he only succeeded in confusing and offending the artist.

In the midst of Leon's swishing and swirling of his now-blunt crayon, Wally picked up his boards, discarded the tracing papers neatly in the wastebasket and walked off without a word, never to enter the Harvey portals again.

Leon was devastated. The next day he implored me to get Wally back in the fold. "He's one of the greatest artists we ever had here," Leon said.

Wally hung up the phone on us and Leon gave up his drawing classes.

Since 1897 when *The Yellow Kid*, a comic strip in Hearst's *New York American* was reprinted in a cardboard-covered newsstand edition, newspaper comic strips have been published in varying forms: first in black-and white, then in the traditional four-color comic books. Most of these syndicate retreads were plagued by boring layouts consisting of too many small panels per page and complicated by the repetition caused by the "continuation" format of the dailies.

Al Harvey had an idea that he could take this same dull material, edit it to eliminate the repetition and rearrange the panels into larger, irregularly shaped page-layouts and individual stories with big original splash pages and titles. New action art would be created for the covers; usually drawn by a "ghost" artist imitating the style of the original.

Al Avison and I became the head ghosts.

Harvey arranged for reprint rights with comic strip artists from King Features and other syndicates, offering them 50 percent of the profits where they had been receiving as little as five percent from other publishers.

Over the years, Harvey Publications published Milt Caniff's *Terry and the Pirates*, Chester Gould's *Dick Tracy*, Chic Young's *Blondie and Dagwood* and *The Phantom*, *Kerry Drake* and others.

A few of the artists who created their strips maintained full financial control over them. Two of the more prominent were Ham Fisher (*Joe Palooka*) and Al Capp, the flamboyant creator of *Li'l Abner*. These two became close friends—not to each other, but to Al Harvey, whose company paid them handsome royalties. Actually, Capp and Fisher disliked

(continued on page 44)

The "Grey Ghost," Joe Simon, strikes again, putting Chester Gould's Dick Tracy behind bars long before Warren Beatty did.

Art Joe Simon/Dick Tracy Characters Copyright 1990 Tribune Media Services

Fighting American Art: By & Copyright 1988 Joe Simon & Jack Kirby

NEW TOONS ON THE BLOCK

They're attending Acme Looniversity & hoping to graduate as classic cartoon characters.

By BOB MILLER

Just as 1990 marks the 50th birthday of Bugs Bunny, and the 60th anniversary of Warner Bros. cartoons, it introduces a new generation of Looney Tunes characters, brought to television by Warners and Steven Spielberg. *Tiny Toon Adventures* aims to uphold the Warners slapstick tradition while updating the situations for the '90s, in 65 half-hour episodes that premiere September 17.

The show is hosted by Buster Bunny, the 14-year-old wisecracking counterpart to Bugs, and his best friend Babs Bunny, an impressionist who will do anything for a laugh. They reside in the forest of Acme Acres, and go to school at Acme Looniversity along with their friends: Plucky Duck—greedy, egotistical, selfish yet lovable; Hamton Pig—shy, gullible and overweight; Montana Max—the world's richest, meanest kid and Buster's worst enemy; Elmyra—a sweet but inept little girl who wants to love every animal to death; Dizzy Devil—who gets tangled up in his tongue when he spins; and a score of other Tiny Toons.

For story editor Paul Dini, the challenge was to write fresh, original stories with the characters continuing the Warners legacy.

"That's a big responsibility when you have new characters who are, in a way, pretenders to the throne of Bugs Bunny and Daffy Duck, acting alongside them," Dini says. "That was something we thought about a lot at the very beginning: Are we going to need Bugs or Daffy around to bail us out on the shows? Or, if we bring in Bugs and Daffy, would we rely too much on them? And I think the answer to that is no, in that Bugs is in a fair amount of the shows, as are the classic Warners characters, but they're really guest characters or they're mentors or they have sudden, funny appearances. They're really not what the show is about."

Generally, the classic characters serve as instructors to their younger counterparts, teaching them the fine art of comedy at Acme Looniversity.

"When you see the classic Warners characters, they'll be doing things not too far from what we would expect them to do," Dini says. "The Tasmanian Devil, for instance, teaches Search and Destroy class to Dizzy Devil. They sleep through Elmer Fudd's class. Yosemite Sam is the teacher from Hell that nobody wants: He's stern, strict and authoritative. And Foghorn Leghorn is like the big blabbermouth teacher who never stops talking. Those are good characters for the Tiny Toons to pit themselves against, because they represent adults who talk too much or are stick-in-the-mud types."

Unlike their classic counterparts, the Tiny Toons will have their roots in Acme Acres with occasional globetrotting.

An example of hare growth: preliminary sketch for the show's host, Buster Bunny.

Photo: Art Leonardi

ACME CAPTION: Behind every great Toon there's a writer (Tom Minton, in front), a story editor (Paul Dini with sign) and a producer (Tom Ruegger).

Concept Art: Barry Caldwell

Shirley, Babs and Fifi in action as visualized by Barry Caldwell. Sorry, kids, there will be no gunplaying for these or any other Tiny Toons.

As to who the Tiny Toons are, they are *not* the classic Looney Toons as little kids. Neither are they the sons and daughters of Bugs, Daffy and the others (with the exception of Gogo Dodo being the son of the original Dodo bird from "Porky in Wackyland").

Paul Dini describes them as "younger versions of similar species of animals. There are humanoid Toons (Elmyra and Montana Max); animal Toons that talk like humans (Buster, Babs, Plucky) and animal Toons who act like animals (Furrball the Cat, Barky Marky)."

Before the series begins in syndication, a special will air on CBS explaining who the Tiny Toons are and where they came from. Oddly enough, this pilot episode was written about midway through the season.

"In this case, that helped us out, because now we have a better handle on the characters," Dini explains. "When we wrote the pilot, we had written about 45 episodes, so by then, we knew the characters we really loved, which characters were not working so well, which characters worked better by themselves or which characters to mine for maximum humor. Those are the ones we spotlight throughout the show.

"We have between 16 and 20 characters as our regulars, and yet you're not going to see them all in the pilot. There's no way you can do it. We have 30 minutes and we have to establish our star characters, and some sort of conflict for them to resolve, *and* bring in Bugs and Daffy *and* the reason they were created *and* some story in there, so there are some characters you're not going to see in the pilot. And that's fine, because kids will be able to discover them over a period of time."

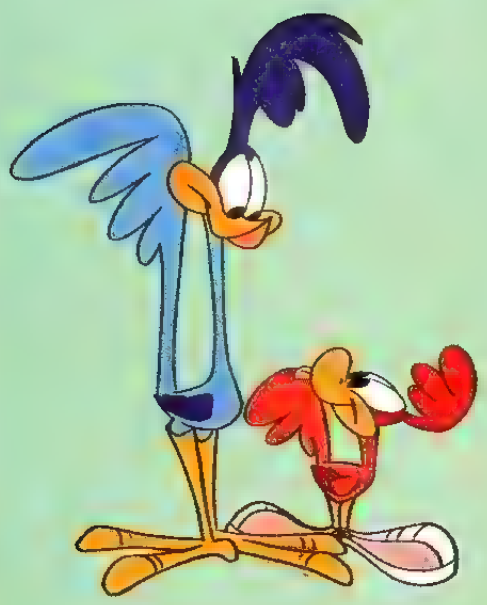
According to Dini, the concept of *Tiny Toons* originated with Terry Semel, the president of Warner Bros.

"He was looking for a way to inject new life into the Warners animation department, which had been going along fine in releasing the old cartoons with Bugs and Daffy. The subject of new animation came up with the classic characters, and at the same time, they were pursuing the idea of doing something with junior versions of Looney Tunes characters. Either baby versions of Bugs and Daffy and Porky, or else their sons, daughters, nephews and offspring.

"What eventually happened was, after calling Steven Spielberg into the picture, they decided to do younger versions of similar types of characters, but not a direct relation. They're not really linked by family; more by species and tradition. Once it was decided that that's the way they were going, there was development done on *Tiny Toons* as a feature, in conjunction with Amblin," Dini says.

Jean MacCurdy, vice-president and general manager of Warners Animation, says, "The idea started—and it started before I got here—out of conversations with Dan Romanelli [head of licensing for Warners], Terry Semel and Steven. It was in the feature division for two years, in development there, and they finally decided that the best initial format would be television."

Of course, turning popular characters into infant or adolescent versions is nothing new. It's already been done



The old Warner Bros. characters will cameo as instructors at the Looniversity. The Roadrunner impresses on Little Beeper the need for speed against *Carnivorous Vulgaris*.

with *Muppet Babies*, *Flintstone Kids*, *Popeye and Son*, *A Pup Named Scooby Doo* and next year, *Adventures of James Bond Jr.* Why would Warners want to do the same?

"Well, I think in Warner Brothers' case, they had an opportunity to work with Steven Spielberg on a project," says producer Tom Ruegger. "His fondness for the old Warners characters was well-known. But he didn't want to just work on characters that Chuck Jones, Friz Freleng, Bob McKimson and Bob Clampett made famous and created. He wanted to be involved with the creation of some *new* characters.

"OK, look at the marketplace. Where are cartoons successful? When are they watched? It's the kids' market in the afternoon and on the weekend. And so, it makes sense to aim a cartoon series at kids. We know what the market is, so we're going to create some new characters. To make kid characters is an obvious solution. Going into the kids market with characters that remind you of Bugs, Daffy and Porky is a *wonderful* bonus. It's going to get an immediate view-in, and yet, each of these characters has his or her own slant on life," Ruegger says.

The decision was made in December 1988 to make *Tiny Toons* a TV series, with Jean MacCurdy overseeing production of 65 episodes. MacCurdy's experience in children's television began with NBC in 1974, as an executive in children's programming. In 1979, she joined Warner Bros. as Director of Animation Programming, where she worked with Friz Freleng to compile three "assemblage" features, *The Looney Looney Looney Bugs Bunny Movie*, *Daffy Duck's Fantastic Island* and *1001 Rabbit Tales*. From 1983 to 1986, she worked at Hanna-Barbera as a vice president, joined Marvel Productions in 1987 supervising *Fraggle Rock*, *Muppet Babies* and the *X-Men* pilot, and then in 1989, she rejoined Warner Bros. Animation as vice-president and general manager.

The first person she hired was Tom Ruegger as producer. Ruegger had written cartoons extensively for Filmation, including *Flash Gordon*, *Blackstar*, *The Lone Ranger* and *Tarzan*, and he developed (with Arthur Nadel) *He-Man and the Masters of the Universe*. From 1982 to 1988, he worked at Hanna-Barbera as producer, story editor, writer and programming executive, on such series as *Pound Puppies*, *Yogi's Treasure Hunt* and *A Pup Named Scooby Doo*.

In January 1989, Ruegger and writer Wayne Katz began developing the characters with Spielberg. They introduced the concept of having the Warners characters live in a fixed locale, Acme Acres.

"Our feeling was that there's a demand from the audience to have a certain world that you can emotionally tie into," Jean MacCurdy explains. "If you bounced around too much and did a different show every day, it wouldn't have the value of giving them a home base. But we tried to give ourselves as much leeway as we could with the setting, and that's why within Acme Acres, anything and everything is possible. We do take them to cartoony versions of real areas. But most stories take place in Acme Acres."

At the edge of Acme Acres is Wackyland, the home of Gogo Dodo. Paul Dini describes Wackyland as "the land of living puns, where a bucket full of soil will come up and give you money and that's pay dirt. Or, a very friendly-looking writing utensil will come up to you—your pen pal. It's like bad pun-a-rama."

Initially, the format of *Tiny Toons*

When Calamity and Little Beep go zipping along, it's through concrete canyons.

was three six-minute shorts with a common theme. The format later became a mix of storytelling with the addition of half-hour adventures.

After Spielberg approved the series concept, Tom Ruegger and Wayne Katz found other creative people, including *Mighty Mouse* writers/directors Jim Reardon, Tom Minton and Eddie Fitzgerald to come up with names for the characters and story springboards. Ken Boyer (from Disney) and Alfred Gimeno (from Hanna-Barbera) started designing the characters, conveying youth by emphasizing the heads and feet.

By March, Jean MacCurdy hired Paul Dini as a staff writer. He had written episodes of *He-Man*, *Scooby-Doo* and *Pound Puppies*, and story-edited *The Ewoks/Droids Adventure Hour* for Lucasfilm (which he discussed in STARLOG YEARBOOK #3) and the new *Beany & Cecil* for DIC.

"They were still in the process of naming and creating some characters," Dini relates. "I worked with them a little bit on honing the characters and then took over as story editor shortly thereafter." Dini wrote and edited the majority of *Tiny Toon Adventures*.

Another writer, Sherri Stoner, was one of the models who posed as Ariel for *The Little Mermaid*. She joined Dini as a story editor late in '89, and in June '90, she flew to London to write for Spielberg's upcoming animated feature, *We're Back*. In between writing assignments, she's scheduled to pose for Disney's *Beauty and the Beast* this fall. (As an in-joke, she appears in several *Tiny Toon* episodes, in one as a mermaid.)

Casting the Tiny Toons turned out to be a long process, with Warners auditioning about 600 people, and Spielberg having the ultimate choice.

At one point, the legendary Mel Blanc was under consideration to reprise the classic Warners Toons.

"We started recording voices last year, and the issue was still unresolved whether we were going to use him for the show," Paul Dini says. "Although there were some characters he could not do, or he had trouble doing such as Yosemite Sam and Taz, he was Bugs and Porky right up to the end. He could do those voices. So, the issue was unresolved whether we were going to use Mel Blanc when he passed away."

But, Dini adds, "We *did* find a really terrific replacement in Jeff Bergman, who can do the classic characters, who does Bugs, Daffy and Elmer in 'Box Office Bunny,' and he has been doing Bugs in radio and TV ads. He has worked out fine.

"Stan Freberg is fortunately still with us. He's happy to come in and do Junior Bear, Pete Puma and occasionally other voices when we ask him real nice.

"June Foray [CS #13] is back as Granny. One thing that I wish we had really been able to do and we just never did is bring Witch Hazel into the show. Maybe next season."

Dini is enthusiastic about the new cast, particularly Tress MacNeille as the voice of Babs Bunny. "She does Babs' whole repertoire of characters because she's not only doing Babs, she'll do Babs as Katharine Hepburn, Sally Field, Madonna or Cher. Because Babs is a non-stop imitation machine. Babs is Elmer doing Elvis. Or Babs is doing her friends at Acme Looniversity. So, Tress has a tremendous range, and she adds a lot to the shows."

"Buster Bunny is Charlie Adler, who gives it a great deal of energy," says Tom Ruegger. "Buster at times becomes the calm at the center of the storm because the other characters around him are out of their minds. He can be crazy and nutty, too, but our

audience may need someone who they can count on to be somewhat rational and Buster sometimes provides that." Ironically, Adler voiced Cavey Jr., the son of Captain Caveman, Mel Blanc.

The voice of Elmyra comes from Cree Summer, who voiced Princess Kneesaa on the first season of *Ewoks*, and currently stars as Freddie on *A Different World*. Summer also voices Mary Melody, a black girl who shelters Furrball the cat.

Other voices include Joe Alaskey as Plucky Duck (he voiced Yosemite Sam in *Who Framed Roger Rabbit*); Don Messick as the wistful Hamton Pig; Frank Welker as Gogo Dodo and Father Bear; Candy Milo as Sweetie Bird; Maurice LeMarche as Dizzy Devil; and Gail Matthius as Shirley the Loon.

Occasional guest stars include Vincent Price as the voice of Edgar Allan Poe, and Carol Kane as a duck from outer space.

Montana Max is voiced by Danny Cooksey, who appeared in the last three seasons of *Diff'rent Strokes* as red-haired Sam McKinney, Arnold's adopted brother.

Relates Paul Dini, "Danny does a tremendous MEAN VOICE. He has to go in and *scream* ALL THE TIME. 'Cause he's the young heir-apparent to Yosemite Sam's gravelly voice, and at the show's end, it must take a lot out of his vocal cords. But he's a great kid. He pours everything out into Montana Max."

With the exception of Gogo Dodo, the new Toons aren't related to the originals, but poor Hamton is still having trouble in Wackyland.

Dini found that Spielberg was "very open as far as stories go, and he has been available for story meetings. Frequently, he'll call up Sherri, the other story editor, and me with ideas. Like, he'll be driving to work and he'll have a thought; he'll call us here at the office or write it down and send it over and we'll get together for a session."

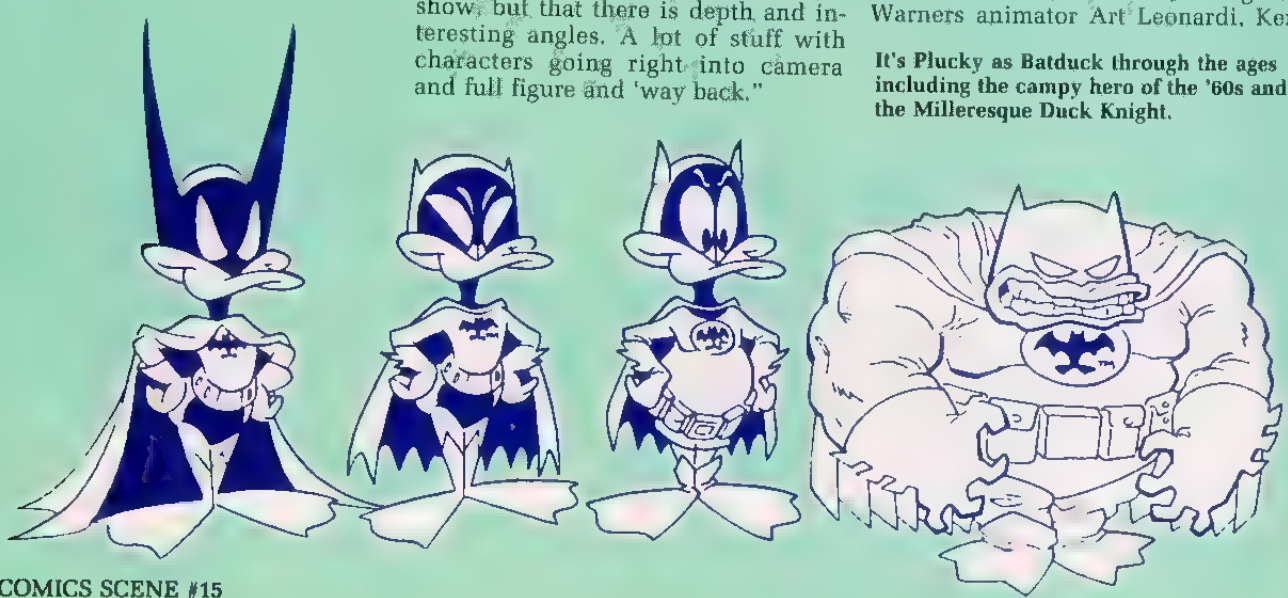
"When we first met with Steven, we told him our feelings about what we thought the show should be," says Jean MacCurdy. "And then he would build upon that. It was very much a wonderful collaborative give-and-take effort. Then, he went off and directed *Always*, and it was actually good timing because we had all this input from him and we were able to digest it and slowly move it forward. By the time he finished *Always*, we were into scripts and he has been reading those and storyboards and looking at rough cuts and pitching stories and basically giving approval to what's being produced.

"He's *so* visual with his thinking, especially in terms with the storyboards. He's really pushed us in terms of it being little mini-movies, with the camera angles and the staging; that it's not just a left-to-right show, but that there is depth and interesting angles. A lot of stuff with characters going right into camera and full figure and 'way back."

The Spielberg/Warners team-up is pushing for *Tiny Toon Adventures* to be a top-quality show, with the use of 25,000 cels per episode, rather than the usual Saturday morning standard of 10,000, to allow for more fluid movement.

It's also one of the rare TV cartoons (such as *The Simpsons*, *Gerald McBoing-Boing*, and *Garfield & Friends*) that has each episode *individually scored*, as they were in the original Warners shorts. But *Tiny Toons* uses a *full* orchestra (over 40 pieces). The supervising composer is Bruce (*Silverado*) Broughton.

And, as with the classics, episodes are being produced under the classic Warner Bros. unit system (rather than the department system of other TV animation studios), in which directors oversee nearly every facet of production. The directors include Art Vitello (*Gummi Bears*, *Slimer*), original Warners animator Art Leonardi, Ken



It's Plucky as Batduck through the ages including the campy hero of the '60s and the Milleresque Duck Knight.

Batduck Art Bruce Timm

Shirley the Loon is a very harmonic Toon.

Babs Bunny is a material girl—she does impersonations (as voiced by Tress MacNeille) ranging from Madonna to Katharine Hepburn.

All Tiny Toon Adventures Characters & Art Trademark & Copyright 1990 Warner Bros. Inc.

Boyer (*Winnie the Pooh, Rescue Rangers*), Kent Butterworth (*The Simpsons, Mighty Mouse*), Eddie Fitzgerald (*Mighty Mouse, Flash Gordon*) and Rich Arons (*Beany & Cecil*), managing a staff of more than 100 artists.

Such a commitment requires a high budget, which in this case is around $400,000 an episode.

Some *Tiny Toon Adventures* will feature sequels to Warners classics. "Son of Duck Dodgers in the 24 1/2 Century" stars Daffy as Duck Dodgers, with Plucky as his eager young space cadet, who encounter Marvin Martian with his own apprentice, Marcia Martian. The layouts and backgrounds are being rendered by Maurice Noble, the designer of the original "Duck Dodgers" short.

Other stories will parody contemporary films, with Plucky spoofing *Batman* and *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*.

As for parodies of Steven Spielberg movies, "The temptation has been there and yet we've *not* really done it very much," Paul Dini says. "Buster and Babs go to the movies and they see a bunch of different ones, so we do an Indiana Jones parody. In the show where Plucky goes to Hollywood to sell his screenplay idea, originally, he wanted to sell it to Spielberg. And then Steven said, 'No, this is the *Tiny Toons* show, and I'm more than content to think of the ideas, stories and characters. I really don't want to be featured in the show.' It would be too much patting on the back."

Because *Tiny Toons* is a syndicated series, Dini and the writers have been able to use the physical humor that's usually restricted by the networks on Saturday morning.

Dini cites a situation where, in the school lunchroom, Buster and Plucky try to make Hamton laugh so hard milk shoots out of his nose, and instead it happens to all three of them.

"If you pitched that to a network, they would just give you a very strange look," he says. "But the idea, I think, is almost naughty to a kid. They respond to something like that, and you can get away with it."

Although the writers had more creative freedom, there *were* restrictions on the Tiny Toons on situations common to the Warners classics.

"Well, Steven asked us not to use handguns or rifles within the show," Dini says. "He didn't want Montana Max or other characters using guns on the Tiny Toons as Elmer Fudd would. That's fine. These are kids; kids shouldn't have guns.

"Actually, we do it in one cartoon. Montana Max is the world's richest kid. He buys himself a rifle and goes

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Green Hornet Characters & Art Trademark & Copyright 1980, 1989, 1990 The Green Hornet, Inc.

Heroic in real life, Van Williams remembers his latest adventures as the Green Hornet.

By WILL MURRAY

Van Williams is rediscovering what it means to be the Green Hornet. The star of the 1966-67 ABC TV version of the popular radio show is relaxing in the hotel lounge of the Character Collectibles Show in Baltimore after a whirlwind cross-country convention tour to promote Now Comics' *Green Hornet* comic book (see CS #9). He's casually dressed in a grey sports coat. Silvery threads streak his hair. Although he looks barely 10 years older than when he played Britt Reid, all Williams needs is a matching mask to pass as the *Grey* Hornet.

"Oh, I've had a lot of fun," he says in the clipped no-nonsense tone that is his trademark. "Adam West has been doing this stuff for years and turned me on to it. He said, 'What you'll do is really appreciate the knowledge that what you did 22 years ago is still extremely well-remembered and appreciated.' I said, 'Oh, yeah, there might be 10 people.' Hey, you know, I won't say that I was mobbed—I've *never* been the type of actor to be mobbed—but I've signed thousands of autographs. I think I've gotten more of a feel for that than anything I have done in the last 15-20 years."

Although best-remembered for his dual Green Hornet role, Williams (who discussed his career previously in STARLOG #135) looks back on his acting days with mixed emotions.

THE GREY HORNET

Selected Photos Courtesy Will Murray

The Burma Horse **drafts the TV Hornet (Williams) and Kato (Bruce Lee) back to action in the shady underworld of showbiz**

"I was bitter in many of the roles that I played," he admits. "I wasn't really that happy about having to do *The Green Hornet*, but after 22 years, to know that you made an impression on somebody who remembers so much about it, that makes me feel good. It really does! It makes me appreciate that for the 28 or 30 years I spent in the acting business, *someone* remembers what I did. I made my mark. Not the mark that a Tom Selleck or somebody like that made, but I made my mark."

Having been exposed to appre ia- tive fans for the first time, Williams is enjoying his return to the spotlight.

"I don't know whether I want to make this a big thing or not," he says, "but as long as it goes along like this, and the people are as nice as they are, why not? I don't really think I would like to go out and open supermarkets and things like that where you're not meeting fans. Here, I'm meeting people who have an interest in what I've done and know the history of what I've done in that business much more than I really know about it. It *amazes* me! And it's fun. It gets me out of LA, breaks up the monotony of my life—which is not exactly what I would say is a great life anymore, running around and spending a lot of time on airplanes—so I've enjoyed it."

And it's an eye-opening experience, too. There was a time when Williams would often be interviewed about *The Green Hornet*, but *every* question would revolve around his late co-star, Bruce Lee. No more.

"There *was* a Bruce Lee phenomenon," he recalls. "That's *gone*. Occasionally, I get a question like, 'Tell me, what was it really like working with Bruce Lee?' They always frame it that way, you know, but not nearly as much as it used to be. In fact, Bruce isn't really brought up all that much anymore

Which is quite a change from the period after Lee's death where every piece of film he had been in was resurrected and recycled, including a hodgepodge compilation of *Green Hornet* episodes released theatrically in 1974 as *Fury of the Dragon*, in which *Lee* was billed as the s

"That was done after Bruce died," Williams recalls, his voice dripping with disdain. "They came to me and I had to sign a release because I had the right to be billed above him. I had *no* interest in that business or that show or anything else. So, I signed it. They gave me a little money and put the thing out. I heard it was a disaster. They put three shows together and tried to recoup something on Bru s name and *everybody* complained. That was horrid, pure prostitution. It should *never* have been don

Another thing that Williams has discovered is that while many fans remember him from the oft-seen syndicated *Batman* two-parter in which he guest-starred as the Hornet, he's not seen as merely a spin-off of Batmania.

"It's amazing how many die-hard *Green Hornet* fans are *not* fans of the *Batman* TV show," he says. "They didn't like it. They thought they were being cheated. I don't know whether it works the other way when Adam to conventions or not, but I'm d that most of the real die-hard fans do *not* like it."

These days, Now Comics' popular *Green Hornet* series is exposing the character, and the man who played him, to a new audience. Williams, himself a lifelong fan of the original radio show, appreciates that, too.

Photo © Harley McDonnell

"After 22 years, to know that you made an impression on somebody who remembers so much about it, that makes me feel good," admits Williams.

"The comic book has done a good job," he says. "I like what they've done with it. I like the story as they've set it up. The characters look *real*. I think they do a better job of that than any comics that I've ever seen.

"I also like the generation deal," he adds, referring to the dynasty of Green Hornets depicted in the Now title. "I think that's really good, and in the way that they're leading into this, now the third generation."

During his Character Collectibles appearance last December, Now Comics publisher Tony Caputo approached Williams with an unusual offer: to co-script a two-part *Tales of the Green Hornet* mini-series with writer Robert Ingersoll.

"It's called *The Burma Horse*," Williams explains. "There has been a little lull in the crime-fighting back in Detroit—of course it's never mentioned where the city is—and Kato goes back for a family visit to Japan. While he's there, he enters a kung fu contest, and he comes to the attention of this big business man who's also making movies. He approaches Kato about doing this movie starring his daughter, a beautiful Japanese girl. It's done on location in Thailand, and ends up back in the United States. The movie is about the jade smuggling business—which is almost as bad as the *drug* smuggling business—out of Burma."

In reality, Williams explains, the movie production is just a blind for something right up the Green Hornet's alley.

"I don't know whether I want to reveal the plot or not," he says cautiously, "but to make a long story short, it turns out that it's actually a *drug* smuggling business. Certain things *are* used in the motion picture industry, such as film, can be shipped, and the containers are sealed because you don't want to expose the film. And they are shipping drugs that way."

Lest it sound more like a Kato mini-series, Williams hastens to add that Britt Reid holds up his end of the story, too.

"It ends up in Detroit," he reveals. "Britt Reid, unbeknownst to Kato, has been hearing about this great big shipment of dope coming into town. Britt Reid and Kato get back together and, by hook or crook, they set the whole thing up to get the guys. But the people who are involved discover that Kato knows what they're doing, so they're after him. And, on the other end, they think the Green Hornet is trying to rip 'em off, so they're after *him*! It makes a pretty good little deal."

Reflecting on his experience writing the role he made so memorable on TV, Williams' voice warms.

"Well, I kind of enjoyed it myself," he admits. "You know, I never had any thought about doing this. It was more Tony Caputo's idea than anything else. I'm *not* a writer. I had a heck of a time getting to sit down and write a two-page synopsis. Mine was really a skeleton, just some ideas for Robert Ingersoll. I've never met him or talked to him, but he took it and ran with it. Tony sent me the first part and I was amazed. Ingersoll did a heck of a job. He stayed very, very close to the synopsis that I gave him instead of getting way off and putting in his own stuff."

Ingersoll carefully fleshed out Williams' outline and scripted from fully-painted artwork by Dell Barras.

"I was really amazed at how he picked up on it, kept everything almost exactly as I did it, and used the names that I gave him, because I spent a lot of time in Japan, in Thailand, in Cambodia, in Laos, and all those places, and I was involved in a thing with the Yakuza, the Japanese Mafia. For some reason, they didn't use that. I don't know where that got killed, but they didn't use the idea that the bad guy was using all these fronts as a producer and everything else, which actually took place."

Although Williams is reluctant to talk specifics, prior to his going into business for himself and joining the Los Angeles Sheriff's Department as a reserve deputy, he was involved in law-enforcement activities out of the country. It was that work, Williams reveals, even more than his acting background, that prompted Caputo to consider him as a *Hornet* writer.

"When Tony approached me, he said, 'Hey, have you had anything in your experiences with law enforcement and the other stuff that you've done that might make an interesting story?' I said, 'I don't know. I've had many interesting experiences, but I don't know whether I can put them to the Green Hornet or not.' But then I started to think about it. I put down some ideas and I figured, 'Hey, this stuff is interesting.' "

With a wealth of real life adventures to draw upon, Williams found he had plenty of material. But as the familiar refrain goes, he changed the names and places to protect the innocent. Not to mention the guilty.

Green Hornet TV Photos: Copyright 1966 1967, 1981 20th Century Fox TV/Greenway Productions

With talk of a screen version of the Hornet, Williams is more concerned with its quality than his possible role in it.

"It really wasn't one particular episode," he says of *The Burma Horse*'s inspiration. "It was a number of different things that I was involved with and I just put them all together so it would make sense with the Green Hornet. It was very believable."

Williams' hankering to get involved as more than an actor may explain why, while he owns cattle ranches and a thriving communications company, he's willing to literally risk his neck as a reserve deputy.

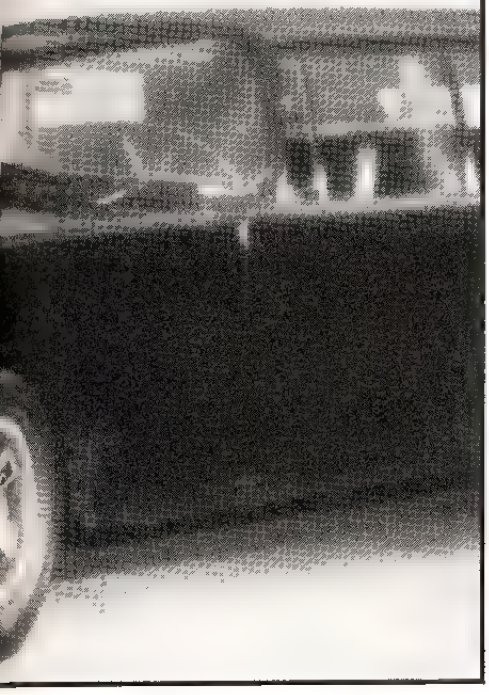
"I didn't like the play acting," he explains. "I wanted to do this stuff that I was doing for *real*. I got into police work because I really wanted to do it and find out what it was like—not play acting on a TV show. I have always been an outdoor guy. I was a cowboy from Texas, grew up on a ranch, never was a big city guy."

During his deputy days, Williams has gotten involved in crime-busting that would make Britt Reid proud.

"I was involved in shootings, and things like that," he reveals. "I was

(continued on page 44)

"It's amazing how many die-hard *Green Hornet* fans are *not* fans of the *Batman* TV show," says Williams of their campy Gotham City counterparts (Adam West and Burt Ward).



LOOK -- I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU THINK YOU'RE DOING, KIDNAPPING ME, BUT--
WE'RE SAVING YOUR LIFE. YOU MIGHT AT LEAST SAY "THANK YOU."
WHAT'S YOUR PRICE?!
INFORMATION ABOUT THE GREEN ARMY TAKE US HOME, KATO -- WE'VE ALL GOT SOME TALKING TO DO!
TO BE CONTINUED...!

Art: Jeff Butler/David Mowry

Simon

(continued from page 32)

each other with an intensity that lasted to their dying days.

Capp had started his comic strip career working as an apprentice and then assistant to Fisher. The two men were as different as could be—Capp, a brilliant, extroverted intellectual; Fisher, a quiet plodder whose strength was in his traditional storytelling on the drawing board. Their personalities clashed constantly, and when Capp quit *Joe Palooka* to start his own strip, the battle was on. Each tried to outdo the other, both extremely successful with their characters becoming worldwide institutions, spawning major films, toys, merchandising and even Broadway musicals. But it was Al Capp, because of his quick wit and biting sarcasm, who became the favorite of radio and TV talk shows, always ready with a quip or quote for the press—in constant demand as a public speaker.

Born Alfred Caplin, Capp grew up in New Haven, Connecticut, the elder son in a poor family. When he was nine years old, on a hot, sweltering day, he climbed atop a moving ice truck to cool himself off. He reached for a sliver of ice to quench his thirst, slipped on the ice, lost his balance and fell to the trolley tracks. A trolley car ran over the struggling boy, resulting in the loss of a leg. Eventually, he was fitted with a wooden leg.

Al Capp loved to party. One night when he was on a speaking tour in London, his celebrating friends all but wrecked his hotel suite. Capp collapsed into bed, pulled the covers over him and slept into the afternoon.

When he awoke, he phoned for room service. The waiter, a tall, erect stuffy type, came into the room to take his order. Capp poked his head up from beneath the covers. He ordered bacon and eggs, pancakes, coffee, toast and butter.

The waiter wrote the order on his pad. He turned to the far side of the bed. A leg, clad in stocking and shoe, protruded from beneath the covers. It was Capp's wooden leg. The waiter said, "And what will the other gentleman have?"

Capp said, "He'll have the same."

Despite Al Harvey's attempts to heal the rift between Fisher and Capp, they remained enemies to the end.

I did many covers for Ham Fisher's comic books and consulted with him many times. Even today, when I leave my studio, I look up at the windows of his former studio in the Parc Vendome Apartments directly across the street from my place in New York City and I remember.

Williams

(continued from page 43)

involved in hairier experiences in mountain rescue stuff that I did, climbing cliffs and rappeling out of helicopters and down into a 2,000-foot canyon."

But his most memorable experiences for the LA Sheriff's office had to do with high-speed pursuits where the Black Beauty might have been handy.

"I was involved in a pursuit that went all the way from Malibu," he recalls, "across Malibu Canyon, down the Ventura Freeway, down the Hollywood Freeway, and down the Long Beach Freeway. It took about an hour-and-a-half on a crowded Sunday with speeds up to almost 100 miles an hour with the freeways looking like a parking lot and we're *right* by the fence. There was a sergeant in a car in front of us that was throwing up bolts and rocks and cracking our windshield. He ran out of gas and we had to pick him up. That's heart attack city when a chase goes on for *that* long. By the time we got there," he adds, "they had shot the guy to death."

For an actor who did hundreds of TV shows and starred in series as diverse as *Surfside 6* and his last outing, *Westwind*, Williams looks back on his varied career as little more than an interesting failure.

"I did it *all* wrong," he admits. "If only I could have gone back to the very beginning and prepared myself well as an actor instead of stumbling through a bunch of junk. I did about 10 shows that I'm proud of. I'm not saying I'm not proud of *The Green Hornet*. I'm a *lot* prouder of it right now than I was six months ago."

Recent talk of a Green Hornet movie with the Now Comics version of the character doesn't exactly leave Van Williams starstruck with the possibility of a return to acting.

"Well, I'm a pessimist," he says. "I guarantee you the people who have the rights to that show have never thought of using me in that picture. In the first place, I have *no* name value. I've been out of the business for a *long* time. Unless they came and saw what's going on out here in this kind of never-never land that really doesn't have anything to do with Hollywood, [Williams doubts] they would even consider doing that. Usually, when somebody gets the rights to do something—like they did with *Batman* - they're telling themselves right from the very beginning, 'Well, we won't do it like that because that's not us. We want to put our stamp on it. We want to get as far away from the other thing as we can.' "

Still, the retired actor is curious about the project. "I hope they don't foul it up," he says. "We worked hard to try to portray that thing as close to the radio show as we could and I think we did a good job. I got a lot of criticism for doing that show straight hard-nosed crime-fighter type deal and everything else—but it was the only way I was going to play it. I always really liked the character. I had a lot of respect for the character. And I *still* like him. Basically, he's an honest guy and, to a certain extent, I've done what the Green Hornet has done without running around in disguise by getting involved with law enforcement. The Green Hornet didn't make anything out of it, I didn't make anything out of it, I got paid a dollar a year, yet I went out there and put my life on the line for the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department. I appreciate what the heck those guys do out there. You know, they've got a tough, tough job."

His experiences have given him a different insight on the character and how he might have been portrayed more effectively on TV.

"They should have brought out the Hornet being a vigilante more," Williams observes. "That he was fed up with the justice system because basically that's where both the Lone Ranger and the Green Hornet came from. They were vigilantes. They didn't like that these crooks got away with all of this stuff and continued to operate because the police had their hands tied by the justice system. He went beyond that and trapped 'em. Now, it would be entrapment. You look at almost all those *Lone Rangers* and *Green Hornets* and half that stuff that they did was entrapment. But the police supposedly didn't know that the Hornet was working on the side of the law."

If it sounds as if the message of Van Williams is that true heroes never retire, think again.

"Well, me, myself, I'm retiring," he says wistfully. "I'm getting out of law enforcement. I'm looking to living for the next two or three years on the ranch out in the middle of nowhere—maybe Idaho, Wyoming or somewhere. I think you reach a certain age and it's not a matter of the desire or whatever, it's just that physically, you're not able to do that in the right frame of mind any more. So, I've had to face that fact, which I *really* don't like."

Wherever he goes and whatever he does, one thing is certain: Whenever *The Green Hornet* radio show comes on, Van Williams will be the first to reach for the dial.

Every Breath They Take

Mark Wheatley & Marc Hempel unveil a reluctant succubus designed to leave you breathless.

By KIM HOWARD JOHNSON

All Breathtaker Art: Marc Hempel/Mark Wheatley

The newest creation of Mark Wheatley and Marc Hempel will literally take your breath away, but it promises to be an enjoyable experience.

Their new four-issue, Prestige Format series for DC Comics is a bit difficult to describe, they say. In a comics market that often demands easy definitions, *Breathtaker* is neither a superhero nor a horror title.

"It's a horrible love story," laughs Wheatley. "It's really a story that explores love and interdependence, and how people affect each other. It uses superheroes in a horror motif as a metaphor to show this. I don't think it's all that horrific—it's shocking, no doubt about it. If it's not shocking, we're not doing our job!

"We've run through this problem several times in the book's marketing, but it's not really horror. Frankly, I always conceptualized it as a superhero book, but [editor] Mike Gold informed me that I have a distinctly different approach to superheroes. That probably isn't a fair label. I would say it's a shocking superhero story with horrific overtones."

Those elements are represented by its two main characters, he says.

"*Breathtaker* is the story of a reluctant succubus named Chase Darrow. She doesn't like having to kill people to survive—in fact, she has never even been 100 percent sure that's what has been happening, because when she has physical contact with any living creature, she tends to suck its life out. But it takes a while. You could make repeated love to her for a

year and still survive, but you would be in pretty bad shape. You would be having a great *time*, but you would be in pretty bad shape!" jokes Wheatley. "The other aspect of the series is a character called 'The Man.' "

"There's a little 'TM' next to it, too!" adds Hempel.

"In fact, that's his logo that he wears on his tie," says Wheatley. "He's a government agent and works for a sub-sub-branch of the NSA, *and* he's a superhero! He has been genetically altered to have powers far beyond those of mortal men, though he's pretty pissed off that when they put him through all this shit to become a superhero, they didn't also repair his male-pattern baldness.

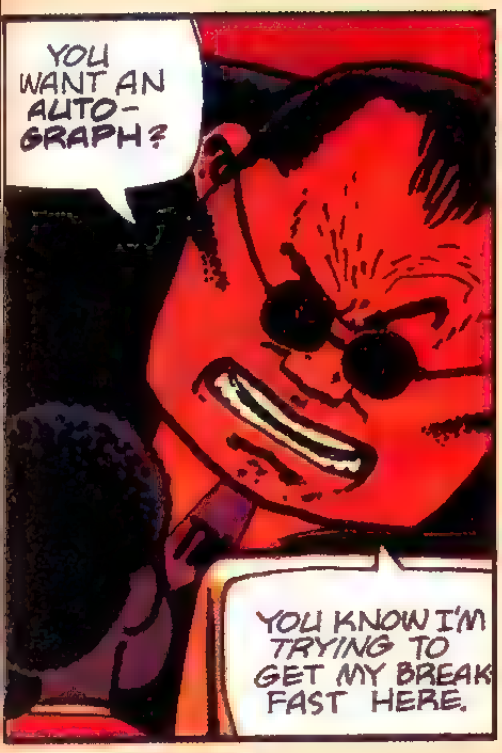
"Basically, The Man is sent out to track down Chase Darrow, mainly because his TV show has dipped in the ratings, and the merchandising folks seem to feel that something like this might boost his sagging appeal, if he can bring in the murderer. Chase Darrow has actually murdered someone in Baltimore. Is this linear enough?" Wheatley laughs.

The story of *Breathtaker* involves The Man chasing Darrow across the country. It also includes the stories of the people who have fallen in love with her and either help or hinder the succubus. In addition, Chase and The Man actually meet at one point and, says Wheatley, "learn to really hate each other!"

He insists that he didn't write it that way, but some of the concepts may appear to be tongue-in-cheek, such as a superhero with his own TV show who works for the NSA.

"Yeah—they figured it was a good cover, because the TV show portrays him as a really super-duper superhero—he can do *anything* on TV. In actuality, he's really just a strong, quick-reflexed person –he can't really fly or anything. They use that as a PR mechanism. Most of the time, he operates outside of the country, but this one particular time, they brought him back into the country and he screwed up real bad—he got mad at somebody

"If you ever wondered how far DC would go—this is it!" Mark Wheatley admits, coining a slogan for this book.



The Man is a hero for the '90s (note his trademark tie) sent to track down the succubus to boost his TV show's ratings.

who damaged his car," says Wheatley. "I didn't write it to be tongue-in-cheek, but it's a reflection of my personality, so it may have come out that way."

"I'm certainly drawing it that way," says Hempel. "Maybe not firmly in cheek."

"Actually, they wouldn't let us show the tongue right *in* the cheek," laughs Wheatley.

The team—originally known to fans for *Mars*, their creation for First Comics several years ago—is splitting up the workload fairly evenly, with Hempel doing the covers.

"There's actually a scene in *Breathtaker* that deals with who's doing what. I created, and am writing and painting the book," says Wheatley. "Marc Hempel designed and is pencilling and inking the book, and he's also overseeing the lettering. Catherine Mayer is assisting him on the lettering, and also assisting me on the painting."

Even though Wheatley oversees *Blood of Dracula* (see CS #10), he says there is *no* connection between the two supernatural creatures that suck away their victims' lives.

"I have tunnel vision," explains Wheatley. "When I'm working on something, I see it only *one* way. It wasn't until I handed the finished thing to somebody who read it and said, 'She's like a vampire, huh?'—it was very surprising to me to get that feedback. It might have happened to me during the writing, but I don't think I heard that until after I finished—I never conceptualized her as a vampire. I never *thought* about it until now!

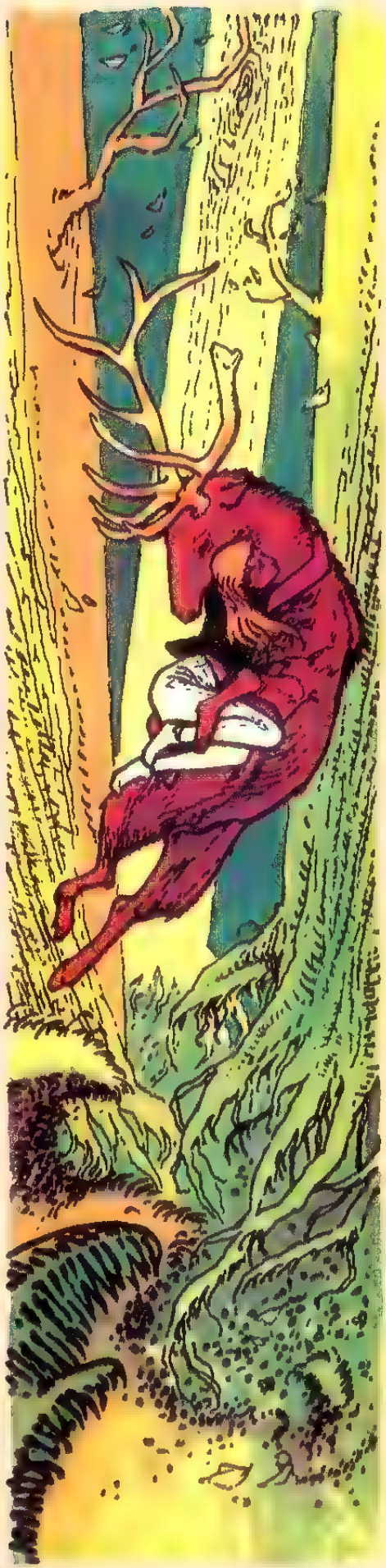
"We got the idea from Acme Ideas, Inc., a subscription service," jokes Wheatley. "No, actually, Marc had done a series of erotic paintings a few years ago that we had planned to develop as a calendar. Since there are 12 months in a year, and he only did six or seven paintings, we never really had quite enough. But I liked the idea that he was good with erotic subject matter, and I wanted to do something along those lines."

"That's *erotic*, not *neurotic*," Hempel interjects.

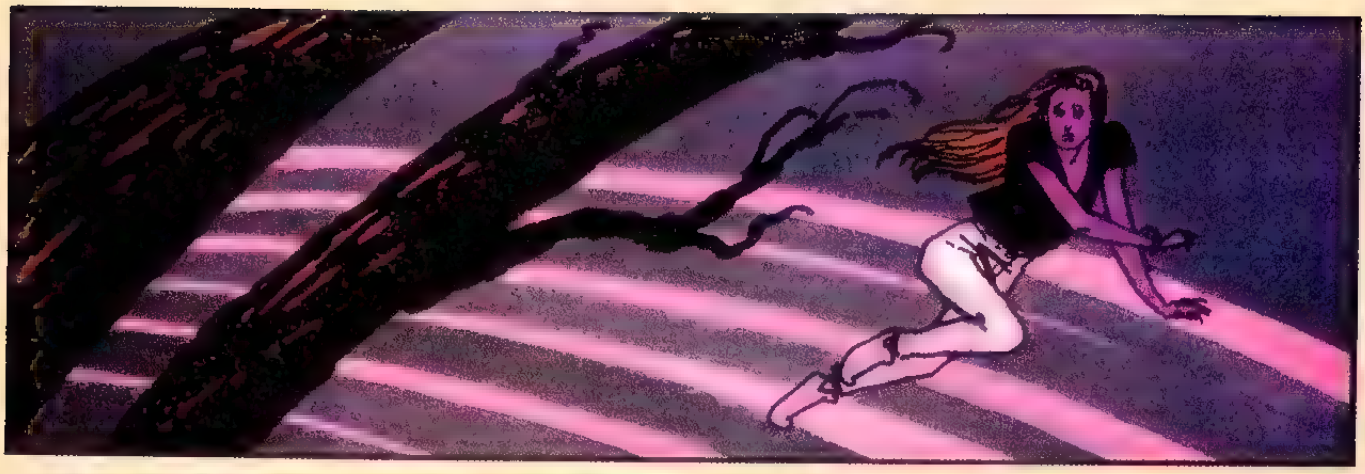
"*Gregory* is a different book," laughs Wheatley, referring to his partner's character, published by Piranha Press. "At the time, we were working on *Jonny Quest* for [former CS contributor/then-Comico editor] Diana Schutz, and she had specifically requested adult, quality comics. So, we whipped up a proposal [for *Breathtaker*] and sent it up to her, and she said, 'Oh, boy, I wish Comico had enough money to put this one out!' That was it. *Breathtaker* was to satisfy her request—and Marc had these erotic paintings around. I knew that if I was going to write something to keep him busy, which is basically the simplest answer, I should do something along those lines, because I was intrigued by it, and I knew he was good at it. So, I sat down and came up with a name, and figured out the story behind the name."

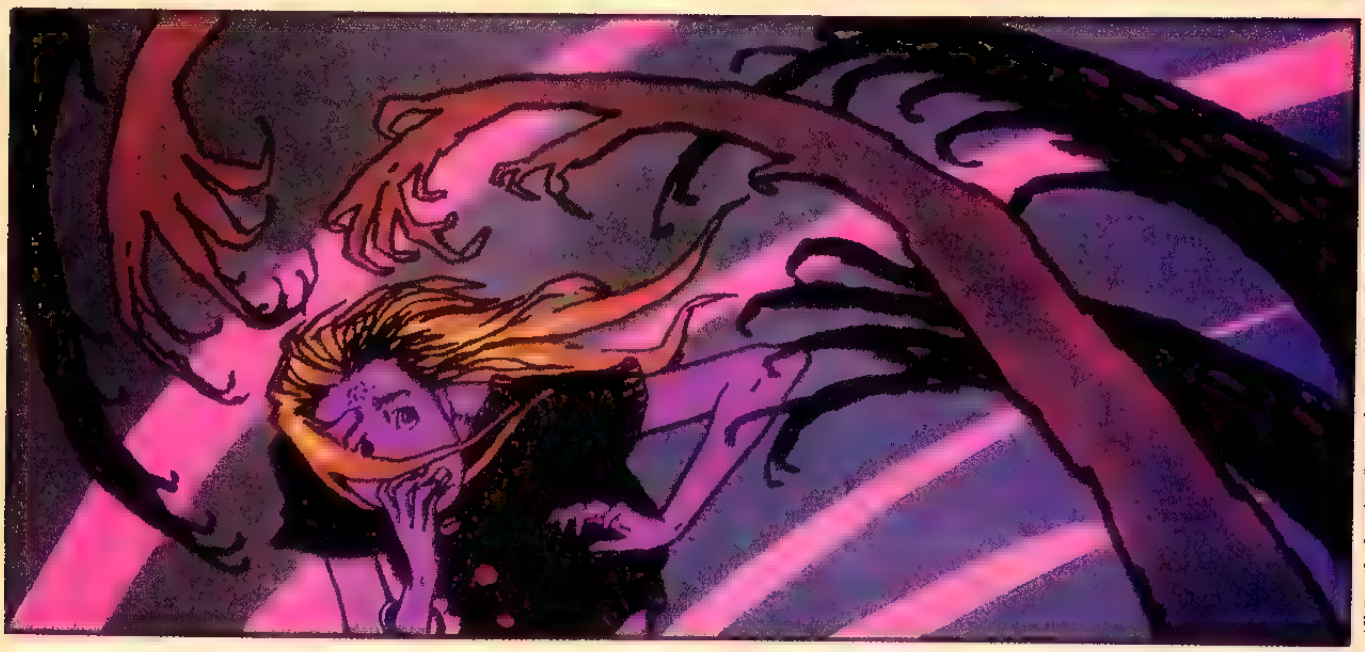
The team decided to go to DC Comics largely because of editor Mike Gold, whom they had known since doing *Mars* for him at First Comics.

"Marc and I are known for a fairly distinctive approach to our books—when the next issue of *X Men* is missing a penciller, people don't immediately think to call us. They think, 'Well, they have that distinctive look, and they won't fit on *X-Men*.' So, Mike had that problem—I had been talking to him over the years, but there really wasn't anything we could just step into. I hadn't developed any new properties to speak of—*Breathtaker* was the first. I sent it to him days after Diana called and said Comico couldn't do it, and Mike accepted it within an hour. It was one of the fastest acceptances I've *ever* experienced. But then, DC took about a year and three months to negotiate the contracts, so it evened out!" says Wheatley.



Chase Darrow is the reluctant succubus who can't help but suck the life out of any living creature she's in contact with.





All Breathtaker Art: Copyright 1990 Mark Wheatley & Marc Hempel

"People are adapting to us, we're not adapting to them," notes Marc Hempel of the team's emergence into the mainstream.

Despite their work for DC, it doesn't signify a move into the mainstream. "People are adapting to us, we're not adapting to them!" Hempel exclaims.

"We were there a little too early, that's what happened," says Wheatley. "*Breathtaker* is more accessible than *Mars*—it's mainstream in that sense, in that almost anybody can pick it up and follow it. It's very reader-friendly. It's the content that we're really pushing this time around!

"We're very happy working at DC. They've been very open to our ideas, although I think the slogan for this book could have been: 'If you ever wondered how far DC would go—this is it!' "

Still, they've managed to retain a sense of the erotic that dominated the paintings which eventually spawned *Breathtaker*.

"Well, we have a number of strategically placed steam clouds in the shower scene, for example," laughs Wheatley, "but the scene exists. It's probably something Mike would be uncomfortable having announced, but I would say *Breathtaker* is *fairly* erotic, probably PG-13."

And depending on reader response, the pair is prepared to bring back Chase Darrow.

"A sequel is indicated by the story's end, although it wasn't a *big* indication –so, you can walk away from it thinking it's over. But we're going to see how this one sells," says Wheatley. "We're getting tremendous feedback. It seems to be becoming the book that all the professionals want to read—photocopies have been passed around at DC more than anything else. We're waiting to see if the fans will respond the same way!"

No matter how the readers respond, Wheatley and Hempel will both be keeping busy. Wheatley will be writing a regular title for DC based on one of the newly-acquired Archie line of superheroes (which includes the Fly and the Hangman), and Hempel is busy on *Gregory, Book Two*, a sequel to his Piranha Press graphic novel.

In the meantime, however, their current project is taking the breath away from fellow pros and their two severest critics.

"Marc and I set out to do an honest reflection of our contemporary concerns, things that we're actually interested in as adults. We challenged ourselves on a number of levels, both on the writing and the artistic ends, to really try to ring true in everything we did. Even though it's a fantasy story, we wanted to deal with recognizable, real honest human reactions given the situations. Everything we've gotten so far, both from peoples' reactions and our own reactions to the work, is that we've not only succeeded with our challenges, we've also *astonished* ourselves. We've always reserved ourselves before this—we've always said at a certain point, 'No, we *shouldn't* do this, this is going too far,' or 'People won't be able to handle this.' We didn't this time—we just kept going," says Mark Wheatley.

"We're more excited now about projects than we've ever been before—this is the most gratifying experience I've ever had. It's actually turning out *better* than we ever expected!" CS

TERMINATOR

This time, it's those unstoppable cyborgs who return to the present to rescue their own mechanical futures.

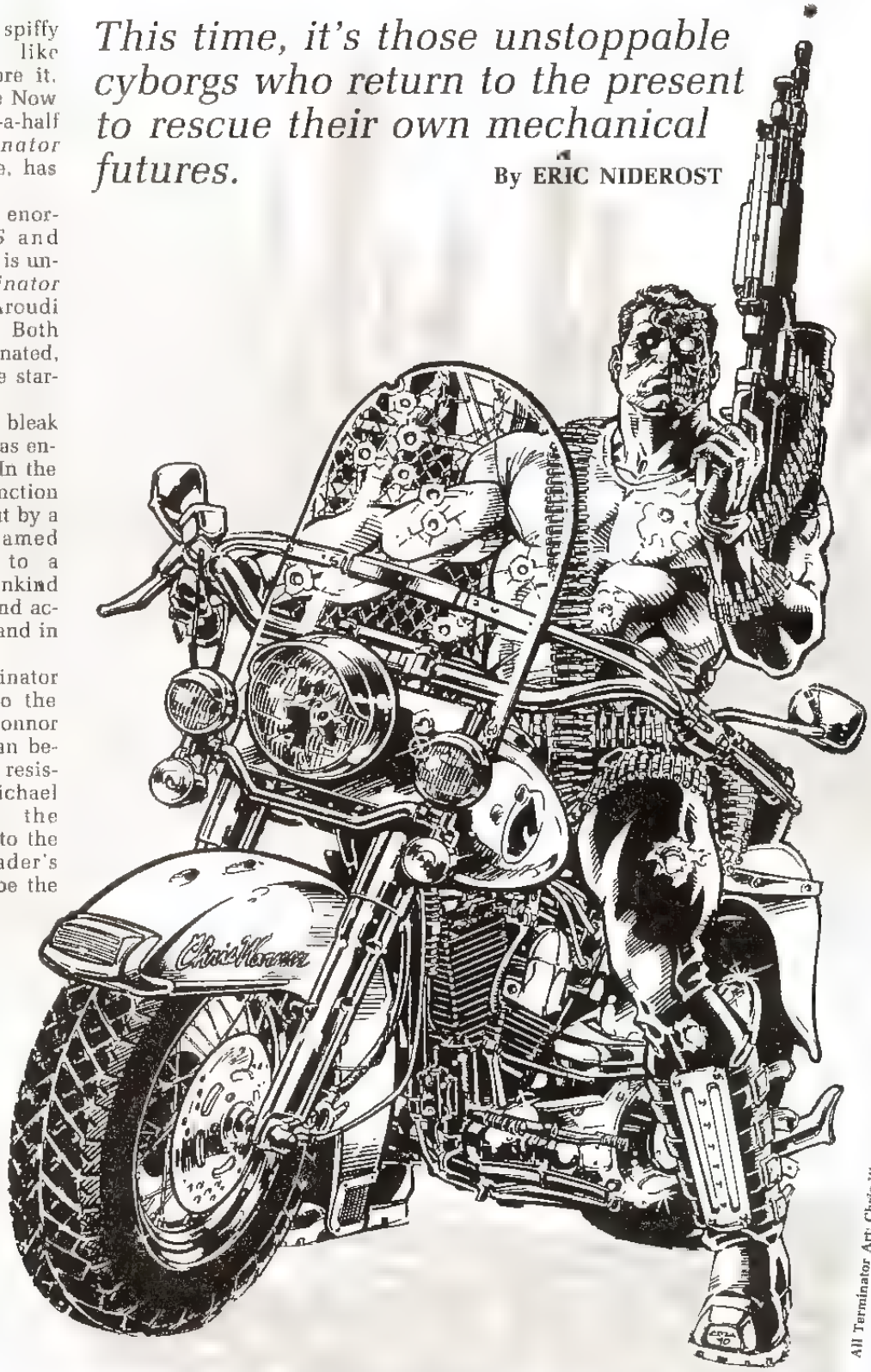
By ERIC NIDEROST

It was full-color, printed on spiffy paper and monthly, but like legions of other titles before it, *Terminator* got terminated. The Now Comics book, about a year-and-a-half old, ended and a new *Terminator* title, published by Dark Horse, has begun.

Dark Horse, following the enormous success of their *ALIENS* and *Predator* series (see CS#3 & #8), is unleashing this four-issue *Terminator* mini-series written by John Aroudi and drawn by Chris Warner. Both projects, the new and the terminated, derive from the 1984 hit movie starring Arnold Schwarzenegger.

The original movie offered a bleak vision of the future, even if it was enlivened by pyrotechnic thrills. In the film, humanity is close to extinction in the year 2029 A.D., wiped out by a race of cyborgs aptly named "Terminators." But thanks to a hero/savior named Connor, mankind is pulled back from the brink and actually begins to get the upper hand in the battle for survival.

To prevent defeat, a Terminator (Schwarzenegger) time trips to the present, hoping to kill Sarah Connor (Linda Hamilton) before she can become the mother of the future resistance leader. Kyle Reese (Michael Biehn), a human from the Terminator's time, also comes to the present to defend his leader's mother — not realizing he will be the father of humanity's savior.



All Terminator Art: Chris Warner/Courtesy Dark Horse Comics

Terminator Characters & Art. Trademark & Copyright 1984 Cinema '84. A Greenberg Brothers Partnership. Licensed by Hemd-

Taking the movie as a springboard from which to launch further adventures, Chris Warner says, "A group of five [human] rebels get a time machine and decide to go into the past—our present—and alter it. They'll go to Cyberdyne Systems, developer of the Terminators, and make sure the Terminators *don't* exist."

But fans of the movie might recall that the time machine that transported Schwarzenegger and Biehn was destroyed so that no one else could use it. "That's true," Warner concedes, "but in our story that time machine was only a prototype—the main machine wasn't on line yet.

"When the five rebels go into the past, they leave a guy behind to destroy the machine. He doesn't complete his task, though—he messes the machine up, but not enough so that some terminators can't use it to go back and try and stop the rebel team. That's the switch—the terminators are trying to save *their* past, just like the humans tried to save theirs in the first movie. In essence in this story, the rebels are the *terminators*."

Warner says there's a bumper crop of new characters in this *Terminator* comic, but advises against looking for old characters from the film, at least for now. "Actually," he laughs, "when you come to think of it, about the only character who remains alive at the movie's end is Sarah Connor! Everybody else was killed off!

"But we'll have to play this by ear. There has been talk of bringing Sarah Connor back, but not in this series. And I don't know if Sarah—if and when she comes back—will have Linda Hamilton's features. Usually, with licensed products, the actors have contracts that say if their likenesses are used, we have to pay an additional royalty."

The artist also explains that they have to keep an eye out for the real world, because a film sequel is in the works, targeted for summer 1991 release. For a very long time, Schwarzenegger's refusal to commit himself made a sequel unlikely. But the muscular superstar *will* reprise his role, and Linda Hamilton will return as well. "We will have to watch work on the second film," Warner says, "in order to know exactly what they're developing."

That being said, "We're going to make them as mutually *exclusive* as possible," Warner maintains, referring to the comic and the upcoming film, "and we'll have our own storyline. And as for [*Terminator* director] James Cameron and [producer] Gale Anne Hurd, those people are so involved with huge movie projects they don't have much interest in comics. Oh, they'll look at it, and if the story is completely out of line, they *might* raise concerns."

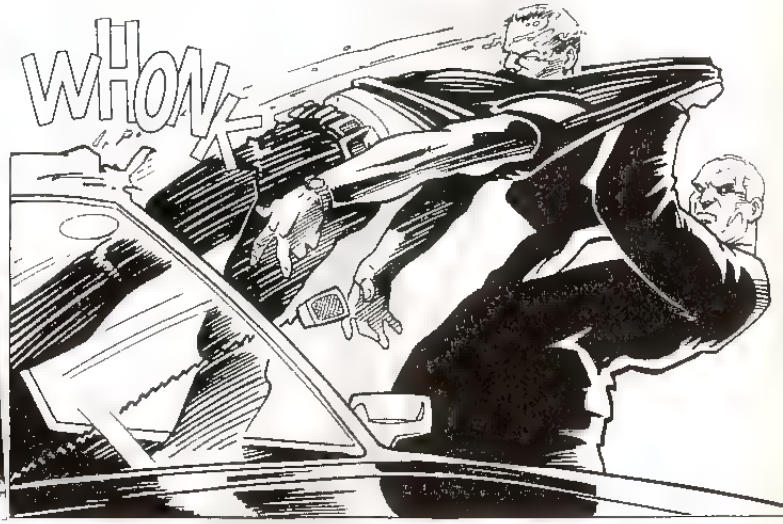
One thing, though; there probably will *not* be any comic cross-over books, in which Terminators "co-star" with Aliens or other creatures. "I don't think there are any plans for such a thing," the artist opines, "even though we did have an *ALIENS vs. Predator* book. In that case, Dark Horse was in a very lucky position in that both properties were owned by 20th Century Fox, so essentially we got two properties for one licensing fee. But even if the two studios agreed [Fox and Carolco] for a, say, *Terminator/Predator* series—you would have to pay *two* licensing fees, and that would raise the book's cost so nigh it wouldn't be economically feasible."

While drawing and scripting *Terminator*, Warner and Arcudi were well aware their series is not the first *Terminator* comic. The Now *Terminator* series wasn't much of a concern, though. Comments the artist, "The Now series took place pretty much in the future, and we felt it didn't have enough of the film's elements in it—it was pretty much on its own! We wanted to focus more on the present; that had a lot to do with the film's success."

This new *Terminator* series is populated by a host of fresh characters, and Warner hardly knows where to begin.

"The Terminators might be killers—but they've achieved racial harmony," jokes writer John Arcudi of the new cyborg mix.

"In movies, you can do complex car chase scenes, in comics you have to be more direct," explains artist Chris Warner.



"The villain," he details, "is a guy named Holister, the head of Cyberdyne Systems. In the continuity we've developed, Cyberdyne is a small potatoes, hi-tech company that does research for the government. But with defense cutbacks, it's on the verge of going under. Astin, the company's main research scientist, is trying to get Holister to diversify, but Holister is an arrogant, hi-tech corporate baron."

Warner implies Holister has his own fish to fry. "On the side," the artist hints, "Holister is working on Project Bellerophon." Warner doesn't want to give away too many details, but there's a link between Bellerophon and the Terminators' development. Probably.

While on the topic of Terminators, Warner explains that there will be not one but *four* unstoppable cyborgs in this current series. The manufacture/birth of the Terminators will be literally and figuratively fleshed out.

"We establish the fact," the penciller elaborates, "that even though the Terminators are built, it takes quite a bit of time to grow the flesh, pseudo-organs, etc. So, the Terminators have a kind of gestation period."

But once created, the comic Terminators share much in common with their celluloid prototype, because they're "*tough* people." But there are some differences; not only are there different body types, there's also an ethnic and sexual mix.

"One Terminator," Warner details, "is physically similar to the Schwarzenegger character in the movie, only he has blonde hair. There's a black Terminator, and a lady Terminator, who's an attractive body-building type. But there's also a short Terminator—about five foot—who's kind of against type. He's a very pivotal character."

But what's the story here? Has Affirmative Action hit the Terminators? Are they Equal Opportunity villains? "Well, no," chuckles Warner, "but in a comic of this kind, you have to make a *physical* costume for the characters, to make them as distinct as possible, so that at any given time, you can tell them apart. This isn't a superhero comic, where you have a variety of costumes to tell the characters apart."

For his part, writer John Arcudi thinks the ethnic mix is amusing. "Think of it," he demands playfully, "the Terminators might be killers—but they've achieved racial harmony!"

The comic scribe enjoyed working on *Terminator*, but does admit putting together the series' first issue was somewhat hectic. "We were really under the gun on the first one," Arcudi confesses. "Since we didn't have the time, I had to go into it right away with only a plot outline. Usually, I like to block it all out first—in essence, storyboard it."

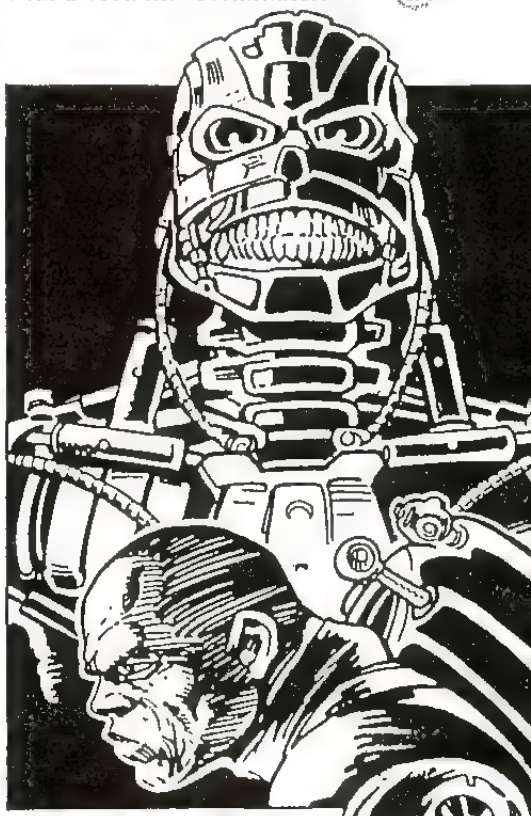
Though the *Terminator* comic features a self-contained storyline, Arcudi reveals he was greatly influenced by the movie. "That's true," the writer acknowledges, "and I was probably more influenced than Chris wanted me to be! For example—car chases. I had those, and I don't think Chris likes to draw cars!

"But it wasn't only that—there was also the violence. Originally, it was almost X-rated in terms of violence, but it was toned down later. Remember early in the picture, when the Schwarzenegger character rips out the liver of that biker? I had a scene similar to that."

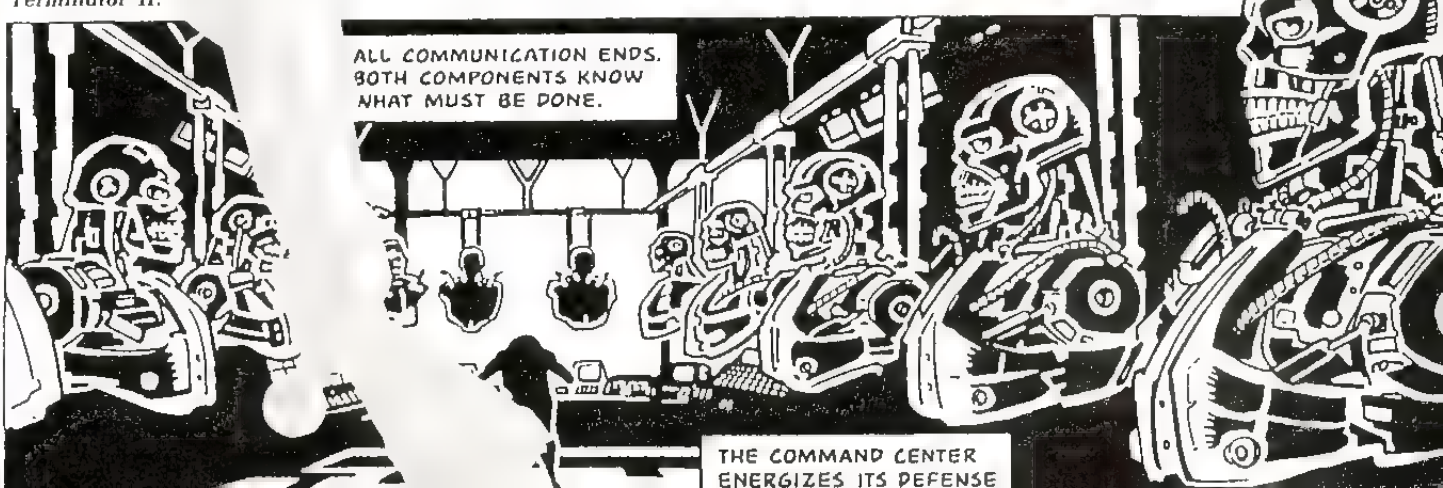
Warner says the rebel team that goes back into the past—our present—is also an assorted group of individuals. "Here," he explains, "we have two women, a black male, a Hispanic male and a tall, blonde male. The leader is a woman named Mary. She and Astin, the research scientist, become involved, but not romantically. This is a story that deals more in *loyalties*."

The artist says it isn't easy to come up with different facial and body types for the comics, but "I have a pretty extensive reference file. I have clippings of models, some more-or-less famous, gleaned from fashion magazines, body-building magazines, and the like. I try to find someone who visually fits the character's personality profile.

"Once you develop a style—and I'm guilty of this, just as well as other artists—it's real easy for all your characters to look the same. In a superhero book, you can get away with it, because this guy has a mask, or that guy, a cape. You can't do that with a book like *Terminator*." CS



The film's only survivor won't appear in this series, until her fate is clear in *Terminator II*.



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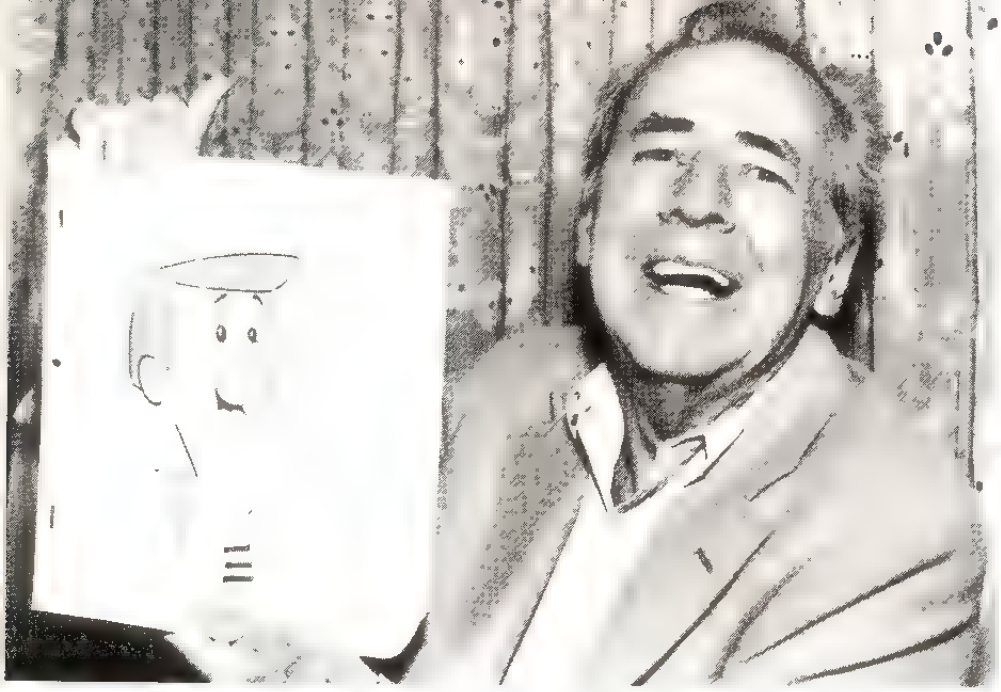


O'Hanlon Photo. Copyright 1988 Hanna-Barbera Productions Inc.

The Man Who Was George Jetson

By MICHAEL MALLORY

Voicing that space-age breadwinner was a life's work for actor George O'Hanlon.

"George pretty much played himself," recalls Janet (Judy Jetson) Waldo of the late O'Hanlon.

It takes a special and unique talent to build a career on the basis of being "Average," and actor George O'Hanlon was the master. A generation after starring as Everyman "Joe McDoakes" in a series of comedy two-reelers, he achieved lasting fame as the voice of the Everyman-of-the-Future, George Jetson.

O'Hanlon had just finished recording the voicetrack of *Jetsons: The Movie* in 1989 when he passed away, going the way most actors would prefer—"with his boots on." Born into a show business family, his own performing career covered nearly 60 of his 76 years, and he had gained success as a vaudeville performer, dancer, comedian, actor, writer and director before finding himself auditioning for the lead in a primetime animated sitcom from Hanna-Barbera. "The right voice either makes or breaks the show," says producer/director Joseph Barbera. But O'Hanlon wasn't quite the right voice for the role in question—Fred Flintstone! It would be two more years before Barbera would marry the right voice, O'Hanlon's, with the right role, George Jetson, but not before casting the wrong actor first.

The first George Jetson was veteran

The Jetsons: Remembering Year One

Takamoto Photo: Copyright 1990 Hanna-Barbera

"We wanted the future of *The Jetsons* to be the focal point for entertainment," says animator Iwao Takamoto.

Iwao Takamoto was hardly wet behind the ears when he joined Hanna-Barbera Studios in 1960 as art designer and director. His stint at Disney Studios had resulted in contributions to such animation classics as *Cinderella*, *Peter Pan* and *Lady and the Tramp*. But the current vice-president of creative design is the first to admit that joining the team that introduced *The Jetsons* to TV in 1962 was something completely different.

"It was television and that made things pretty hectic even back then," recalls Takamoto, who recently ramrodded *Jetsons: The Movie* into theaters. "It was 16 weeks from start to answer print in those days and, in terms of production and budget, that was a lot of reality to deal with."

Takamoto remembers that it was Joe Barbera who developed the initial design concepts and drawings for the Jetsons characters. "I'm not sure who did the initial drawings for the first episode but it was definitely Joe who came up with those early ideas," he says.

"I was involved in the refinement of what the characters actually looked like. I helped structure the Jetsons' world and all the ancillary characters that would come into their world. But the designers jumped around once the series got going and so it became almost episodic in terms of who did what on a particular show."

Takamoto relates that nailing the series' distinctive, future design entailed the designers quite literally hitting the books.

"What I remember most about those early days was poring through books that had to do with the visual impression of the world as seen through the eyes of famous designers. We spent a lot of time exposing ourselves to different concepts and designs and looking for something that would say, '*This* is the future.' "

He balks at the notion that *The*

actor Michael O'Shea. "In the testing, he seemed to have the right kind of voice," Barbera remembers. "O'Shea had a strange sound in his voice, which I always look for when I'm casting. We made a deal with him, and we started to record, and at the recording sessions, the whole thing fell apart. We didn't seem to ever get the quality that we got in the testing."

Not for the first time, Barbera scrapped the early soundtracks and started over, looking for the elusive "right sound" (he had earlier scrapped the first five *Flintstones* episodes with Hal Smith before hiring Alan Reed to play Fred). Enter George O'Hanlon. "When George arrived on the scene, he fit into the character. I'll use the word *average* here," Barbera says

If *The Flintstones* drew its inspiration from *The Honeymooners*, then the prototype of *The Jetsons* was *Blondie*. According to Barbera, Dagwood Bumstead was the model for George Jetson, particularly in his never-ending problems with his boss. The connection between the two was strengthened by the casting of Penny Singleton, star of 28 *Blondie* films, as Jane Jetson.

Unlike actors who specialize in voice-overs, providing distinct vocal characteristics for each of a dozen different voices, O'Hanlon kept his char-

Jetsons: The Movie **marks the last time fans will hear from both Mel (Mr. Spacely) Blanc and George O'Hanlon.**

"The right voice either makes or breaks the show," explains producer/director Joseph Barbera, and O'Hanlon's kept it going for more than 25 years.

Jetsons Movie Art Copyright 1989 Universal Studios Inc. & Hanna-Barbera Productions
Jetsons Characters: Trademark & Copyright 1989 Hanna-Barbera Productions

Jetsons design, by 1960s' standards, was radical.

"I don't think what we were doing at that time could be considered radical or revolutionary. I *do* think it paid off in terms of what it was supposed to be. We were presenting the future as a recognizable form to the audience. We wanted the future of *The Jetsons* to be a focal point for *entertainment*. We could have gone for a design that was totally far-out and I think it would have been fun to do. But I don't think it would have served the show's entertainment purpose.

And, of course, the inspiration for *The Jetsons* came from already established sources.

"*The Jetsons* were, in a sense, based on *The Flintstones* and *The Honeymooners*," Takamoto explains. "It can't be denied that *The Flintstones* were structured around Jackie Gleason and his sense of humor more than anything else and I think that humor made its way into *The Jetsons*.

"But the bottom line is that we always tried to make *The Jetsons* relatable to people today. Anything futuristic we inserted into the show jumped out at viewers because it was relating, in some way, to what people were going through in their own lives, and that was the basic attitude we tried to sustain during the series."

If *The Flintstones* were *The Honeymooners*, then *The Jetsons* could be called a space-age version of Blondie and Dagwood.

With *Jetsons: The Movie* (which he discussed in COMICS SCENE SPECTACULAR #3) in theaters, Takamoto and Hanna-Barbera are currently turning their attention to other projects. On the drawing boards is an animated ecological feature entitled *The Endangered* and there's talk that the studio will be involved in some way with the *Green Hornet* feature. Iwao Takamoto also believes that *The Jetsons* odyssey may have more miles to run.

"I don't know if there will be any more *Jetsons* movies," he says. "I may change my mind but right now I think it's probably something that had to be done once and now should be left alone. But if the movie goes over real well, another film or maybe a new TV series will go into production. I would have no problem with that because, as an entertainment vehicle, I still think *The Jetsons* can work."

—Marc Shapiro

Jetsons Art: Copyright 1989 Hanna-Barbera Productions

ROLLERCOASTER RABBIT

Taking a small child firmly by the hand, Roger Rabbit zooms off on an animated ride.

By DAVID HUTCHISON

Roger Rabbit is back. And Baby Herman's got him. Touchstone Pictures and Steven Spielberg present the Toon star's latest adventures in "Roller Coaster Rabbit", a new Maroon Cartoon short accompanying *Dick Tracy*. Though "Roller Coaster Rabbit" is the studio's third Maroon Cartoon, it's the first film produced at the new animation facility at the Disney-MGM Studios in Florida.

For Rob Minkoff, a 6 1/2 year Disney veteran who directed last year's Maroon Cartoon, "Tummy Trouble," this second encounter with the madcap rabbit was a bit different.

"Once again, Roger is the victim of his own undoing," observes Minkoff, "but this time, the action builds steadily to a climax in contrast to 'Tummy Trouble' where things stayed at a rather frenetic pace throughout. In 'Tummy Trouble,' it was incumbent on us to create what was termed the Rube Goldbergian effect—that is, one thing leads to another thing. What made the first Maroon Cartoon, 'Somethin's Cookin' [part of *Who Framed Roger Rabbit*], stand out as a piece of film was how cleverly the process of action and reaction led to a series of complex gags. In 'Tummy Trouble,' we continued that chain reaction, even though the hospital environment wasn't quite as conducive to that process as a kitchen, where you have four closely set walls and a lot of objects that are in close proximity. This cartoon deviated from that chain reaction formula."

Photos. Copyright 1990 Touchstone Pictures & Amblin Entertainment, Inc.

Baby Herman just wants his balloon back, but it's a headlong tumble through terror for poor Roger in the role of "super-sitter."

Droopy Dog Trademark of Turner Entertainment Co. Copyright 1947 Loews, Inc. Renewed 1970 MGM, Inc. Used by Permission of Turner Co

In "Roller Coaster Rabbit," interior settings are completely abandoned when Roger and company visit a county fair. The ever-accommodating rabbit again assumes the role of "super-sitter" while Baby Herman's mother consults a psychic. Roger's woes begin when the irrepressible infant wanders off in search of his missing balloon on a perilous course that takes the duo through a volley of darts, a shooting gallery, into a close encounter with a prize-winning bull and ultimately onto the wildest roller coaster ride ever captured on film.

"Each incident has its own set-up and pay-off," Minkoff explains. "It's more rhythmic in that sense and there are more resolutions. In 'Tummy Trouble,' it was like a long run-on slapstick sentence. Here the pacing of the gags leads up to the roller coaster, which should be the topper.

"The pacing of a Roger Rabbit cartoon comes out of the character himself. He's a particularly manic sort of character, and the humor comes out of hurting him. Since Roger is so obnoxious, it's *funny* when he gets hurt. The difference between comedy and tragedy is in who it's happening to. You laugh when someone obnoxious gets hurt, as opposed to when someone very sensitive and gentle gets hurt. It wouldn't be as funny, for example, if you saw Baby Herman, as the baby, get hurt.

"These Roger Rabbit shorts certainly give us a license to do things that aren't typical for Disney," Minkoff continues. "Before I got into the business, I asked myself where would I rather work? At Disney or Warner Bros.? Since Warner Bros. wasn't making cartoons at the time, my decision was made for me. Now, to have the opportunity to do that kind of material here is great. Unusual, in fact."

Of the seven key animators on "Roller Coaster Rabbit," only one had worked on the previous film. "Many of the people were new on this show. One had worked previously in a small Florida studio, but was originally from the Ukraine. Another was from London and had worked on *Roger Rabbit* [Brigette Hartley]. Alexander Williams, Richard Williams' son, was with us for a while—he left before the show was finished to go back to school at Oxford; he was on his summer break here. And there were three experienced Disney animators Mark Henn being the most experienced he did more footage than anyone else. The others were Dave Stephan and Barry Temple. Mark Kausler was the only animator who did both of the shorts. He certainly has more mixed and varied experience than most of the others."

In this film, the situation dictates what the action is, and no action is more complex than the incredible roller coaster itself. In recent years, background animation has been receiving a great deal of attention. In "Roller Coaster Rabbit," the task of animating the fairground attractions

In many scenes, the complex roller coaster was drawn by computer, though the cels were still painted by hand. Other backgrounds were traditionally rendered.

Photo Copyright 1986 The Walt Disney Company

Animator Mark Henn (left) confessed that "Roger is the kind of character that you just let your hair down, roll your sleeves up and have fun with." Rob Minkoff (right) directed both "Tummy Trouble" and "Roller Coaster Rabbit."

fell to effects animator Barry Cook.

"When producer Thom Enriquez and director Rob Minkoff came here to start the film, we had in mind that we wanted to try using the computer for this roller coaster sequence," Cook says. "Their attitude was basically: Give us one good reason why we should. They were very skeptical that we could pull it off at first, so we worked day and night for a couple of weeks doing a test scene for them and proving that we could get something that they were happy with.

"Not only did we create a 3-D environment of the roller coaster track in the computer," Cook says, "but we also had to animate a string of coaster cars moving along that track. Before now, if we were going to do something like that, we would animate the track, maybe, and part of the background, or it might be an overlay against the background. And then the cars would be animated by hand by the special effects department. Getting the human element into the computer programming is the hard part. Those elements of timing, squash, stretch and those small idiosyncrasies of style that an animator gives to the timing of his drawings are the hardest part of computer programming.

"An animator will work out the timing for an object, Roger's car for example, that might go up a hill and then at the top, it might jump off the track for a number of frames and then as it comes down, it might hit very hard, squash and then recover and maybe wobble as it goes on down the track. On the computer, it's easy to put in positions: one up in the air, another hitting the track and one recovering, and letting it write in all the in-betweens. But the computer hasn't really learned, yet, how a human animator approaches timing. So, the animator has to work very carefully with the computer to make sure that the timing is what we would do if we weren't using the computer.

"I think maybe that's what we tried to look out for most on this film. We worked more like a stop-motion animator, positioning the coaster car in each frame, exactly where we wanted it and not letting a program's automation take over. It would be much easier sometimes to do it that way, but there's just something about it that doesn't fit with the rest of the animation.

"The result is really good because it has a cartoony feeling; there are very few scenes that anybody will look at and say, 'Oh, I'm sure that was done on a computer,' because it feels so much like the rest of the cartoon."

Once a sequence is working on the computer, a plotter draws out each frame which is then Xeroxed onto a cel and painted by hand. "Though the computer saved on having to draw all those ties and rails by hand, they still had to be hand painted. If we let the computer render the drawings, it wouldn't have blended as well as it did with the rest of the film. We knew that was going to be a big job, so we tried to simplify it as much as possible. There are some scenes that have an incredible amount of detail, if we had had to hand draw something like that, it would have taken us...well, I don't want to think how long it would have taken us."

Other drawing chores for the computer included a Ferris wheel, a little spinning ride, a sliding box of darts and a shooting gallery.

"There is effects animation throughout the short," says Cook. "We decided early on that it would be high noon and we would use contact shadows under the characters. The camera department used a split exposure on the shadows so they would look natural.

"The shooting gallery has all these little rabbit targets that we animated. One is sort of like the Easter bunny, and there are other rabbits poking up on each side and small ones behind these eggs and they have little praying hands. Little details like that help to break up the monotony for us.

"We put the Sun from It's a Small World in the background. I sent two FX assistants over to the ride at the Magic Kingdom one day; I asked them to take a look at it so we could put it in there. I don't know how many people would pick up on those kind of things, but the film is loaded with stuff like that—little in-jokes—'Tummy Trouble' was, too.

"The shooting gallery not only had the targets, but we had different sizes of rabbits and ducks and little moving clouds and moving trees and the Sun. Spinning around the clouds are these little already-shot bunnies playing harps. We ended up with only three levels of FX animation on that, but only after some really massive Xerox combinations before we got it down to three levels. Everything was moving at different timings: Some things had 21-drawing cycles, some, 31-drawing cycles, some, 12-drawing cycles. And besides that the art department wanted us to put drop shadows behind *every* target. Thom Enriquez and Kelly Asbury, the art director, decided it would be best if we did that. I tried to talk them out of it, but.... So, we did it.

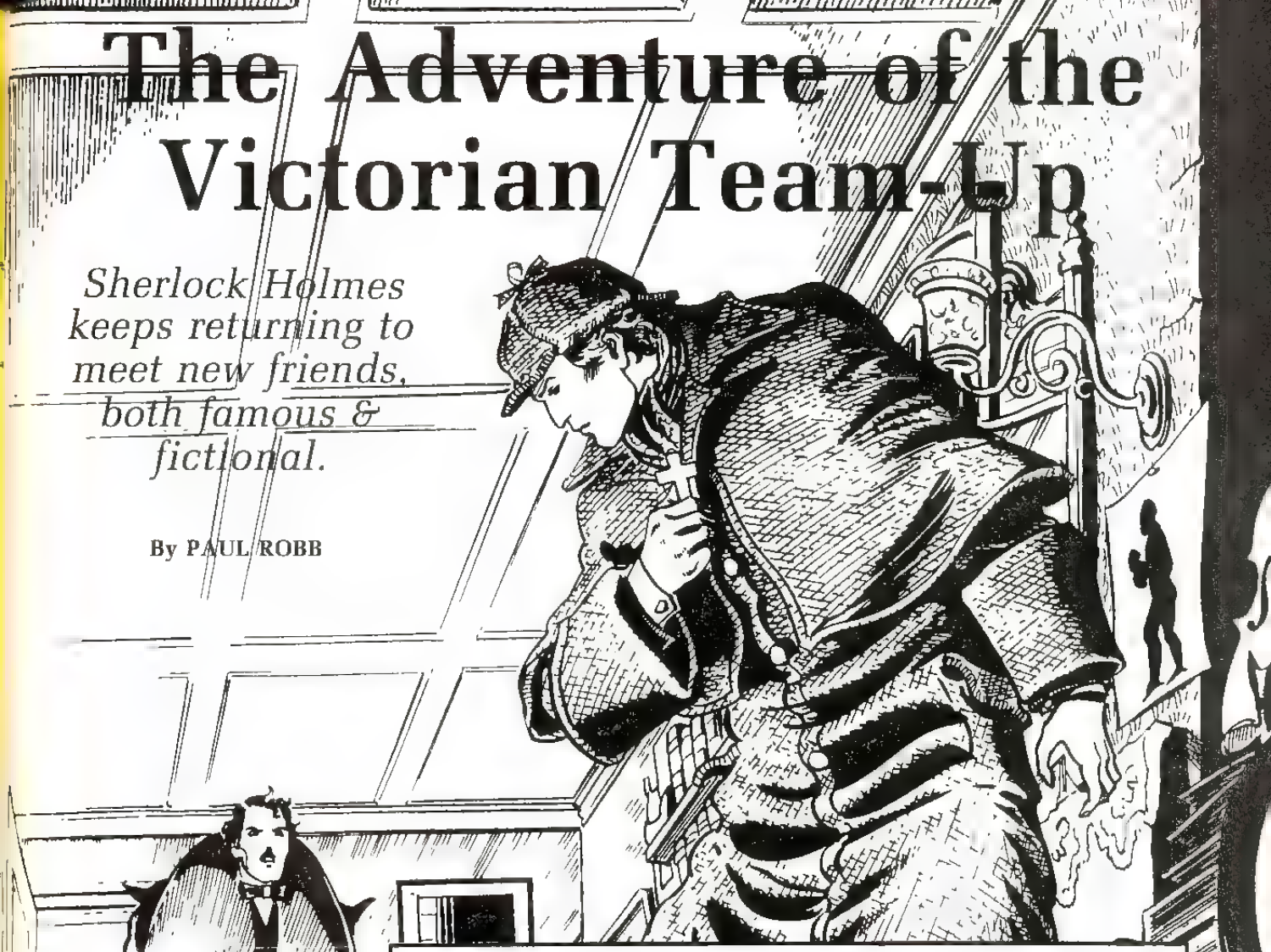
"It looks really nice. That scene is just so perfect the way it looks. It doesn't appear to be unnecessarily complicated, but, if you start examining everything frame by frame and how it moves, it's just a mess. I don't think I've ever had a scene that complex with so many different timings and Xerox combinations. And besides that, there's Roger coming through, and all those gun barrels when he gets shot, and then there's smoke and fire on top of everything else.

(continued on page 66)

The Adventure of the Victorian Team-Up

Sherlock Holmes keeps returning to meet new friends, both famous & fictional.

By PAUL ROBB



In every one of Dr. John Watson's published accounts of his friend's adventures, Sherlock Holmes has been shown fighting all sorts of evil. However, those tales always depicted him using his genius to foil mortal fiends and thwart earthly crimes. Now, thanks to writers Doug Murray and Martin Powell, Eternity Comics is able to bring to light those adventures in which the Great Detective battled far stranger menaces.

Murray, who writes *The 'Nam* for Marvel and recently provided the dialogue for *Batman: Digital Justice*, has penned a four-part mini-series called *Sherlock Holmes and the Case of the Missing Martian* for Eternity. Murray read Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's Holmes novels and stories many years ago and had his interest in Sherlockiana revived after seeing the film *Study in Terror*—in which Holmes (*Baron Munchausen*'s John Neville) meets Jack the Ripper.

So how did Murray come to combine Holmesian adventure with H.G. Wells science fiction?

"I'm a science fiction fan as well as a Sherlock Holmes fan," Murray explains. "There seems to be a connection between the two, because every one I know who likes Holmes is also a big science fiction fan."

And more importantly for Murray, the drawing power of *War of the Worlds* had its roots in an earlier Holmes pastiche involving the Martian invasion. "I always wanted to see a sequel to the Manly Wade Wellman novel *Sherlock Holmes' War of the Worlds* where it's 10 years later on Earth—what could happen? Plus, it gave me a chance to use Moriarty and Professor Challenger."

Yet, according to the writer, this latest adventure is not a *War of the Worlds* story, but one that uses that background in a much larger scenario.

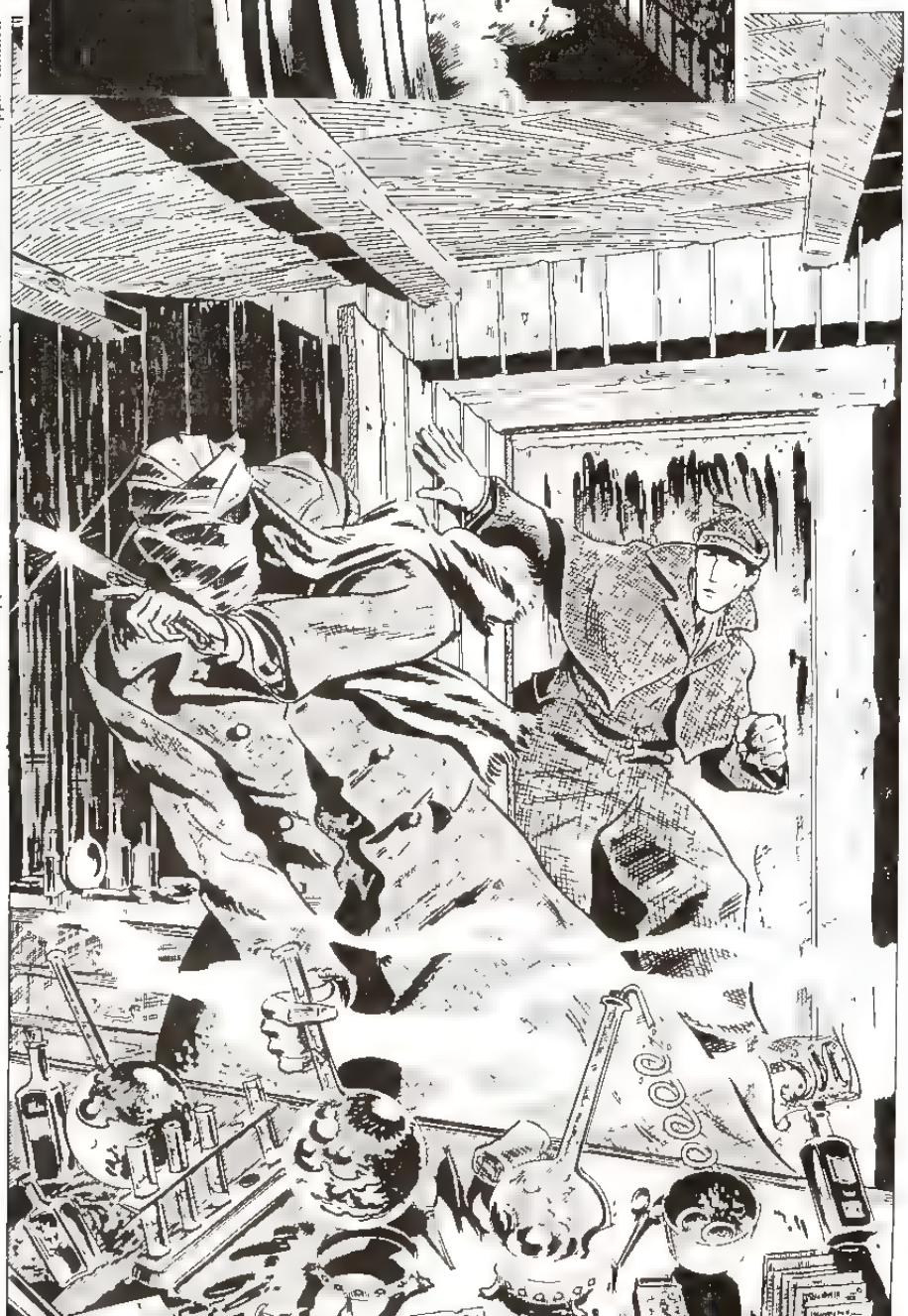
"The Martians are all dead—it's all a plot by Moriarty to make people think the Martians have *come back*. He feels Holmes and Challenger are responsible for putting the Martian specimen in the museum, since it's the only complete one—all the others have disintegrated," he details. "The museum wants to build a special Martian wing but the day before it is to open, a guard discovers the specimen is missing."

Moriarty, long thought dead, has found one of the Martian war ma-

Art: Seppo Makinen

Baskervilles Art Patrick Ollifle

Returning Holmes to more familiar turf, Powell will be adapting *Hound of the Baskervilles* as a graphic novel for Innovation.



Blind Fear Art Seppo Makinen/Trademark & Copyright 1990 Martin Powell & Seppo Makinen

Blind Fear was criticized for the Invisible Man's violent behavior toward the Holmes characters, but Powell maintains the damage had already been done by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle.

chines and sets out to make it work again, but needs the specimen to discover how to operate it.

To solve the case, Holmes is reunited with Dr. Watson, whose new wife has a secret—she thinks she's Jack the Ripper. As Murray explains, there are theories that Watson had at least three wives (Mary, Violet and someone else). "What if he had a fourth wife? Jacqueline—'Jackie,' get it?—finds herself with a scalpel in her hand at the same time as a Ripper murder."

As for Moriarty, Murray didn't feel it was necessary to explain how he has managed to return from the dead. "But this time, he is killed thoroughly in front of 5,000 witnesses," Murray says bluntly, then adds, "It's true that nobody is killed *completely* in comics—they can always come back somehow. Doyle could have brought Moriarty back if he had wanted to."

Case of the Missing Martian takes place in 1914, just prior to World War I, Murray notes, which means this is an adventure of a much older Holmes. However, the artist hasn't captured that feeling, which Murray regrets.

"I want my Holmes to look like a man in his 40s and 50s, but the artist [Topper Helmers] made him somewhat younger than that. I have no control over that. Even Martin Powell's Holmes is too young," observes Murray. "But I'm being a stickler. Everybody knows he's ageless."

And that ageless quality is the main reason for his universal appeal.

"Holmes is a universal character like Superman, Mickey Mouse or Tarzan. He was the touchstone for detectives. I also think that the Victorian era is much more comfortable for people today."

He sees Watson as "Mr. Average Englishman," not as a buffoon. Watson reflects on the English culture and that's the way Murray cast his Watson. An older and heavier Mycroft Holmes (Sherlock's brother) appears as well, and "he doesn't stand up once during the story."

As for further Holmes pastiches, Murray already has one in mind involving Captain Nemo and the Phantom of the Opera. "They're in the same time period. What if the Phantom's face really got that way from radiation burns? It would take place about five years after *Missing Martian* and would have Irene Adler singing at the opera house and Holmes as Sigerson playing his violin. But that project's in the future."

Martin Powell has been credited with reviving Holmes in comics. As the writer of Eternity's popular *Scarlet in Gaslight* and *A Case of Blind Fear*

mini-series, he already has another Holmes story planned, a one-shot entitled *Return of the Devil*.

"I discovered Sherlock Holmes in high school. I was always an avid reader as a kid," Powell says. He did the first issue of *Scarlet in Gaslight* primarily as an "exercise," noting that he sent it everywhere but no one showed any interest except Eternity.

"No one seemed to think it was very remarkable. I was patted on the head and told it was very entertaining but not what they wanted," he recalls. After the success of *Scarlet*, he was asked to do another mini-series, *A Case of Blind Fear*, to tie in with the Holmes newspaper strip reprints.

"It took me a while to think of any ideas. I wasn't trying to compete with the first one; it just naturally suggested itself," he adds. In the first saga, Holmes battled both Dracula and Moriarty, while the second one pitted Holmes against H.G. Wells' Invisible Man and teamed him up with Professor Challenger. Both series have been collected as graphic novels.

One reason why Holmes has never succeeded in his own comic book series, Powell comments, was because the stories were too stiff and stilted, whether they were adaptations or original stories. "What was needed was a *new* approach to the character, a different kind of adventure, and that's how I came up with adding the fantasy elements."

He also notes the influence of the vast array of Holmes novels by new authors. "Had there not been two Holmes and Dracula novels, each totally different from the other [Loren Estelman's *Sherlock Holmes vs. Dracula*, Fred Saberhagen's *The Holmes-Dracula File*] I wouldn't have thought, 'Well, why can't *I* write one?'"

But the writer doesn't think Holmes and Dracula will ever meet up again. "I know there seems to be some regret from fans that I didn't do more with them, but I felt a brief meeting was best." Powell reveals that *Blind Fear* is actually not the "real" sequel to *Scarlet*, although he notes that he is working on a follow up *The Ghosts of Dracula*—which concerns Dracula and Harry Houdini and is set in 1925.

"The premise is that Dracula is still mourning Lucy, spiritualism is high and Dracula may forge an uneasy alliance with Houdini to contact her. Holmes does make a cameo appearance in the second issue, but he isn't called by name," says Powell. "You just see him as he puts on his deerstalker and walks out the door."

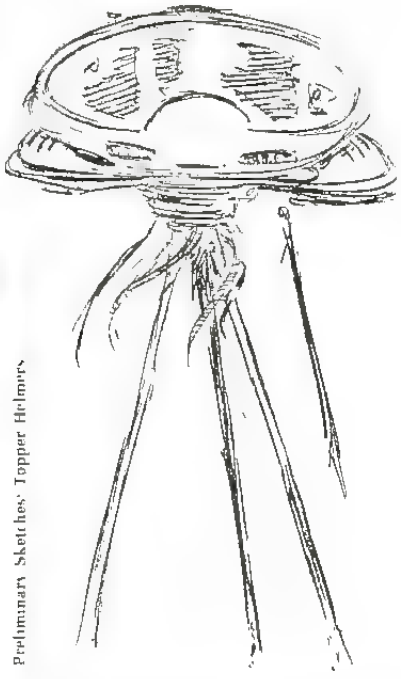
SHE FINALLY FINDS THE THING SOME PART OF HER HAS BEEN SEARCHING FOR
IT IS THERE AMONG THE MEDICAL INSTRUMENTS
SHARP SHINING
IT CALLS TO HER
DEMANDS TO BE PICKED UP, CARRIED
USED
Art Topper Helmers All Missing Martian Art Copyright 1990 Topper Helmers

The *Case of the Missing Martian* is not the only mystery in Murray's series. Dr. Watson's fourth wife believes that she's Jack the Ripper.

As for the team-up concept embracing these Eternity Holmes tales, Powell is firm in his insistence that he wants to get away from it.

"I don't want people to go, 'Oh, who is he teaming Holmes up with now?' I *don't* want to do a Sherlock Holmes team-up title, like *Marvel Team-Up*. Sure, it's fun to team him up with real (and fictional) characters in that time period, but it can be tricky. In *Scarlet*, I used Sarah Bernhardt. I was warned *not* to use real characters like that but I met a relative of hers and they were happy about it," he says.

The fantasy game is afoot when writer Doug Murray presents Holmes and Watson with the *Case of the Missing Martian*.


Preliminary Sketches: Topper Helmers

Doug Murray's Holmesian Martian chronicle for Eternity came as a shock.

"Maybe it was my ego or maybe it was because I had mentioned I was getting tired of Holmes, I'm anxious to see what they do with it. I think the team up concept is getting out of hand, but if it's good—great. If it starts getting tiresome, I'm afraid I'll get blamed," he remarks candidly.

About his upcoming Holmes projects, Powell describes *Return of the Devil* as being Holmes' last public case before his retirement. "He supposedly retired when he was 49. It always puzzled me as to why he re-

(continued on page 60)

After sending Holmes to the War of the Worlds front, Murray may dispatch the sleuth to an infamous Paris opera house.

Art Topper Helmers

Case of The Missing Martian, Trademark & Copyright 1990 Doug Murray

Ace

(continued from page 28)

for the airplanes and the aerial sequences featured in the graphic novel, Pratt not only spent months building an *exact* scale model of a Fokker DR-1, he also had the guts to go up in an old Stearman biplane owned by artist/aviation buff Herb Trimpe. "We went up," says Pratt, "and it's scary as hell—open cockpit, strapped in, *loud*. You can't even hear yourself think. I took a camera up and shot a lot of aerial photos. Herb did a couple of power dives that scared the shit out of me, but it gave me a feel for what it was really like. Hopefully, in the end, it all goes into the story to add some kind of believability."

Pratt also consulted with the original Enemy Ace artist, the legendary Joe Kubert (CS #11), who will write the introduction to the graphic novel. "I was heavily influenced by Kubert's Enemy Ace comics," says Pratt. "There's just no way I couldn't have been influenced—they're so great. They really captured the sense of flight and movement, and I think he's one of the best storytellers ever." Although he was initially worried that Kubert would be critical of his work, Pratt was eventually relieved and even flattered. Not only did Kubert and George Evans (another DC artist and air war expert) approve of his work, Pratt even got a job at Kubert's art school based on his *Enemy Ace* pages. "Well, I really thought Kubert was going to rip me apart," Pratt recalls. "But he said the mood was much more important than the technical details: 'Hey, as long as it feels like it's flying, and you've got the movement....' George Evans said the same thing. 'It *feels* right.'"

As for the possibility of DC reviving *Enemy Ace* as an ongoing series, Pratt thinks that's a bit unlikely, although they will be releasing a reprint of Von Hammer's first two appearances in *Our Army At War* shortly before the graphic novel's publication. "I'm not doing much that Kubert didn't do already," says Pratt. "What I would like to see happen, if *Enemy Ace: War Idyll* is successful, is that they would reprint *all* the great Kubert and Kanigher stuff in a nice big book. People will be able to see where it *really* came from.

"I think many Enemy Ace fans will be pleased," George Pratt says finally. "I'm an Enemy Ace fan, you know, and I did my story in a way that would also please other Enemy Ace fans. I handled Von Hammer in a way that I think is true to the character and true to the whole format of the original stories." CS

Art Seppo Makinen

SHERLOCK HOLMES IS GONE MORIARTY
HOWEVER
I REMAIN.
DRACULA--?
D-D YOU THINK I COULD FORGET?
YOUR DECEPTION YOUR BETRAYAL YOUR CORRUPTION OF LUCY
MY LUCY
NOW YOU'VE BASTARDIZED MY BLOOD--INJECTING YOURSELF TO ASSURE VICTORY AGAINST THE DETECTIVE THE ULTIMATE BLASPHEMY
I AM THE KING OF MY KIND
MORARTY
YOU ARE NOTHING
SNAP
NO!
REVENGE! I HAVE THE RIGHT!

***Scarlet in Gaslight* adds an interesting twist to that fateful day at Reichenbach.**

All Scarlet in Gaslight Art Trademark & Copyright 1988 Martin Powell & Seppo Makinen

Holmes

(continued from page 59)

tired so early. This will be my way of answering that.

"The title refers to several things. First, the return of Holmes' cocaine problem. I've never dealt with it strongly, having only briefly touched on it. Secondly, the return of Springheel Jack, an apparition seen in Victorian England, which has a connection to the plot. Sightings of this demon-like figure were in the 1820s-1900s. He was the Bigfoot and UFO of his day, which is why it's strange not many people have heard of him."

Moriarty also returns—sort of. "I'm not bringing him back alive. It's not a flashback and not a ghost when Holmes sees him. Yet it's safe to say he's not in the story, but the plot revolves around what Holmes has seen," Powell says mysteriously.

Additionally, Powell is adapting *Hound of the Baskervilles* for Innovation as a graphic novel, similar to *A Study in Scarlet*. "Work on it has progressed a little, but it has had to take a backseat to other projects. I'm doing it with artist Patrick Olliffe and it may not be available until sometime in 1991," he notes.

After these two Holmes projects, Powell wants to take a breather from the London fog.

"They will be my swan song on Holmes for a while. I don't want to get typecast, known just for doing Holmes. I'm going to other publishers with potential for contemporary characters and they think I'm only capable of doing period pieces," he says.

The writer also defends his use of violence in his Holmes stories, particularly in *A Case of Blind Fear* in which Watson's wife is cruelly attacked by the transparent Jack Griffin. "I don't feel any guilt over what I did to Watson's wife in the story. Doyle is the bad guy here—he killed her off in his stories that's tragic enough. She and Watson were well suited for each other, so it's perplexing. Why? To get Holmes and Watson back together?

"Maybe it was outrage on my own part as a Holmes fan as to why she had to die. I had already decided to put her in this story, but I had decided that she was *not* going to die so I was going to mislead everyone into that direction."

He has received no criticism, just questions about the treatment of the character. "For me, it answered the question why Watson never had any children. I did it as an aid to entertainment, to show they weren't immune to this kind of crime, even as sacred characters. I think it was a very realistic thing to do."

Commenting on fans' reactions to his two series, Martin Powell relates, "What's most gratifying to me is the expression of gratitude of having brought Sherlock Holmes back into the limelight...and back into comics."

DICK TRACY TALKS

Warren Beatty provides the new profile for Chester Gould's crimestopper.

By DAVID McDONNELL & DAVID HUTCHISON

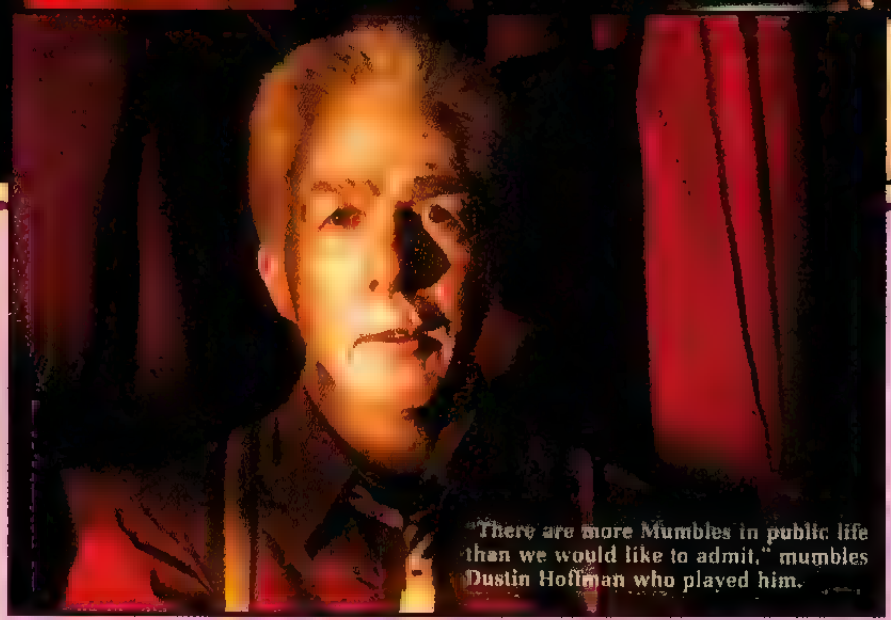
The easy part was making the multi-million dollar movie. Now, for Warren Beatty, the hard part: talking about it.

In the past, Beatty hasn't been entirely comfortable about chatting with the press, citing overly interpretive articles, quotes taken out of context, and out-and-out tabloid fictions fashioned from his life and loves.

"I don't really believe in movie publicity," Beatty says, though he's here for a Walt Disney World press conference and a series of individual interviews to answer literally hundreds of questions about *Dick Tracy*. "I think to go out and talk about movies really keeps the viewer from seeing them without having all this nonsense come out of some actor's mouth. But I think I'm in the minority; I've *not* been waking up and smelling the coffee about this. The way we distribute movies now, the way we make them requires interviews."

So now, Beatty is talking, specifically about just how he and his creative team transformed Chester Gould's classic comic strip detective into a big budget movie.

The project, as executive producer Barrie M. Osborne noted in CS#15, has taken years to reach the screen, going through several studios (Universal, Paramount), directors (John Landis, Richard Benjamin and others) and potential Tracys (Clint Eastwood, Dan Aykroyd). Disney execs Michael Eisner and Jeffrey Katzenberg, based at the time at Paramount, were early champions of the crimestopper. They "were involved in making a movie about Dick



"There are more Mumbles in public life than we would like to admit," mumbles Dustin Hoffman who played him.

Dustin Hoffman Mumbles

About six weeks before he shot it," begins Dustin Hoffman, "Warren Beatty called me up, maybe less than that. All the credit goes to him on *Dick* because I impersonate somebody that he and I know, a producer [Robert Evans, who produced *Marathon Man*], and I've been doing it for 15 years. Warren said, 'You can play that guy. I've got the part; here's your chance. It's Mumbles.' I didn't know who Mumbles was. He told me, 'And if you say no, then I'm *not* going to put Mumbles in the movie, I'll go with another character.' There were many good characters that he had to leave out. This was all his idea.

"So, it's when an actor is told ... you know, when you don't have to worry about developing a character from the ground up, and he tells you, 'Here it is! Do you want to do it?' And he sent me the cartoon."

Hoffman takes great delight in stepping into the character to provide a sample. "[mumble, mumble, mumble]... We see politicians doing it every day ...[mumble, mumble, mumble] and Mumbles isn't any different from Ronnie Reagan saying ... '[mumble, mumble, mumble], uh, I don't remember.' "

With a relaxed chuckle, he becomes himself again, but warns, "There are more Mumbles in public life than we would like to admit.

"It works at home, too," smiles Hoffman. "My wife says, 'Where were you last night?' And I say, 'I, uh [mumble, mumble, mumble].' "

Hoffman is asked if in contrast to his normal procedure of developing a character in rehearsal that this time, if he came to the set with the character of Mumbles fully formed.

"Absolutely true," he admits. "The only thing was I didn't know what those guys [John Caglione Jr., Doug Drexler] were going to do with the makeup. They had that all worked out. I mean, they didn't ask me what my thoughts were. That thing was ready, and they just put it on.

"But you can't have a more generous director than Warren, you can not have a more giving guy, who puts the best people in the world around you.

All Dick Tracy Photos: Peter Sorel/Copyright 1990 Touchstone Pictures

"At first, I couldn't imagine myself playing Dick Tracy, much less producing and directing," says Beatty.

Tracy before I was. They asked me to play Dick Tracy as an actor.

"At first, I didn't want to direct it. I wouldn't have had a clue when I started to think about it. I thought I didn't look like Dick Tracy and I shouldn't play it. Then, I realized that *nobody* looks like Dick Tracy, so nobody would play it. I could probably play it as well as nobody," he laughs.

"Then, I realized I could put on a yellow hat and a matching yellow raincoat and never get dirty when I got into a fight. Things are very simple in *Dick Tracy*. Good is good. Bad is bad. Cops are good, bad guys are bad. This was the chance to be a complete hero and say lines like, 'All right, men, let's go!' So, I began to think about it and I saw two drawings—one was Dick Tracy hitting a bad guy whose hat fell off and the [word balloon] said, 'Take that, you cockroach.' I liked that. The other one had Tess Trueheart with her hands on her hips and she said, 'Dick Tracy, are you asking me to marry you?' When I saw those, I decided I had to do the movie. Those people are nice."

Eventually, the project was set up at Disney with Beatty gathering about him a team of creative support personnel including longtime production designer and pal Richard Sylbert (who discussed the film in CS#13), cinematographer Vittorio Storaro and costume designer Milena Canonero. An earlier *Tracy* script by Jim Cash & Jack Epps Jr. (who would be awarded screen credit) was reshaped by Beatty and Bo Goldman (later billed as special consultant in a move that displeased the Writers Guild). Makeup experts (and GOREZONE columnists) Doug Drexler and John Caglione Jr. were hired to create the gangland grotesqueries who haunted Tracy's classic comic strip years.

There was just one problem—what to do about Tracy himself. Beatty didn't have the detective's razor-sharp profile. Makeup prosthetics were developed, but the Tracy nose just didn't cut it.

"I tried, I tried," Beatty confesses. "Dick Tracy is drawn basically from two angles. The hell of it is in a movie, you have to turn your head—and every time I turned my head [while wearing the test makeup], I looked like somebody else. I didn't look like Dick Tracy.

I've known him for years, and we've never worked together before [as director & actor]. So, there I am with Al Pacino and [cinematographer] Vittorio Storaro, and all these people and unlike many other directors, you stay there as long as you want to. And when *you're* happy, he moves on.

"There are two perceptions of Warren. There's a public perception...and we know what that is, and there's an industry perception of him. I don't think you can name a cinematographer, an editor, a writer, an actor or an art director who wouldn't give their eyeteeth to work him, for a very simple reason: You know Warren is going to assemble the *best* people in the business to work with you and you know he's going to stay with you until you are doing what you feel is your best work. And he's a man of great taste and intelligence."

Even though the characters in *Dick Tracy*, especially the villains, are comic strip characters, Hoffman manages to communicate a great deal of humanity as Mumbles, particularly at the end. Mumbles comes across as a genuine person rather than a two-dimensional cartoon.

"It's nice to hear that," he allows. "But Warren shoots an interminable number of takes. He captures different levels of a performance. So, the cutting of it determines the performance. I assume the humanity was what Warren was looking for because he could have used other takes.

"Chester Gould created these characters....Well, you can read into it, if you want, but when I was a little boy [during WWII], Tojo was Japan, there was Adolph Hitler, there was the Italian [Benito Mussolini], and these were all monsters. Italy was made up of monsters, Japan was made up of monsters, Germany was—they were *all* subhuman people. Because we needed to propagandize that way because we had to go out and kill them. So, when I was shown these masks [of the *Tracy* gangsters] ... they are *not* just masks, but they're a view that maybe Gould had of America. I know that we've heard of the gangster Americans, the underworld Americans. And that this was their perception of us. I wonder if Gould didn't have that in mind. And Warren caught on to that. "

—David Hutchison

Reporters John Schuck (in orange) and Charlie Fleischer (in yellow & blue) question Big Boy Caprice (Al Pacino). "I stopped giving interviews for 12 or 13 years," Beatty says, "because I was misquoted."

Tracy Art Dick Locher/Copyright 1990 Tribune Media Services

"Finally, we realized that Dick Tracy is a kind of solid person in the script, but you've got to try to put a little emotion in it when you're making the movie. The best way I can say it is, we had to see some capillaries in the faces of some of the major characters. All the good guys—Tess Trueheart, Chief Brandon, Pat Patton, Sam Catchem, The Kid and Dick Tracy—don't wear the kind of makeup [that the gangsters do]. It's not, as has been said, that I wanted to look very, very beautiful."

Dick Tracy offered special challenges to Beatty and his colleagues. "We were all a little bit challenged to break a lot of rules that had been consciously or unconsciously set up in all the various departments of filmmaking," Beatty says. "We were working without a net, so to speak, jumping in and attracting attention to the departments in a way that you would ordinarily try to avoid in realistic moviemaking."

Beatty has high praise for the Walt Disney Company, though he admits candidly, "I *dislike* making a deal with them intensely." He characterizes the studio's support as "total," but notes it wasn't Disney that dictated *Dick Tracy*'s colorful style.

"My concept of this film I pretty much had before I went to Disney to make it. Disney was the *one* organization that had the courage to make a film that was such a big leap in style.

"In this picture," the actor/director continues, "you can call many elements two ways—you can say it's kind of a super-realism or it's phony. The characters are prototypical or they're stereotypical. It's one cliche after another or there's one universal situation after another. Disney got the joke—like they got the joke with *Who Framed Roger Rabbit*."

For Beatty, of course, *Tracy* wasn't a joke, but a passion. "My feeling on this was selfish," he says. "I could only make *Dick Tracy* one way. I couldn't have worn a tweed overcoat and a realistic hat. And I knew I would have to have these matte paintings to create the world. I didn't feel there were any particular financial guarantees about how this would come out. I knew I was dealing with a comic strip character, however classic he might be in American history, who was still pretty unknown by the time we got around to making a movie about him. As late as a couple of months [before its premiere], everybody was saying, 'Nobody has ever heard of *Dick Tracy*. Warren Beatty makes a movie every three decades. Kids aren't going to come. Nobody is going to know what it is.' Disney did a remarkable job of making people aware of an old character who's significant in the comic strip state of things, the grandaddy of them all.

"I made this movie because I wanted it to be suitable for kids and the kid in me. I was trying to re-create a world I had seen when I read Chester Gould's strip as a kid; primary emotions, primary colors. It would never have occurred to me to put real blood squirting out of bodies. I never wanted to do that with *Dick Tracy*. It was the wrong mood. And in a period where [many successful] pictures have been very, very violent—we had times where we thought nobody would come to see *Dick Tracy*. Then again, maybe they would."

Casting *Dick Tracy* wasn't difficult. Beatty relied on old friends and co-stars (from his previous movies) like *Ishtar*'s Dustin Hoffman (Mumbles), *Reds*' Paul Sorvino (Lips Manlis), *Heaven Can Wait*'s R.G. Armstrong (Pruneface), James Caan (Spaldoni), his *Bonnie & Clyde* colleagues Michael J. Pollard (Bug Bailey) and Estelle Parsons (Mrs. Trueheart), and "from the first acting class I ever took," James (*Back to the Future*) Tolkan (Numbers).

"You get familiar with certain actors and you just love them," Beatty remarks. "You know what they're going to do. I've worked with Michael J. Pollard since the '50s. Ian Wolfe, who played the Forger, was in *The Fortune* and *Reds* [see the Wolfe interview, STARLOG #135]. I love Ian Wolfe. He's now, I think, 93, 94. The more you know actors, the more you know where those little moments are—and you say, why, I have this scene and I know I can get to that little moment in his life."

Newcomers to the Beatty movie mythos include current real-life romantic interest Madonna (Breathless Mahoney), Charles Durning (Chief Brandon), Charlie (*Men Don't Leave*) Korsmo (The Kid) and *Dirty Rotten Scoundrels*' Glenne Headly (who replaced Sean Young as Tess Trueheart a few days into filming).

The casting of the major bad guy, Big Boy Caprice, was "a little more complicated," according to Beatty. "I saw Al Pacino in a restaurant at lunch and asked for advice on casting that part. Al knows as much about actors as anybody I know and he called me back later and said, 'Do you mean

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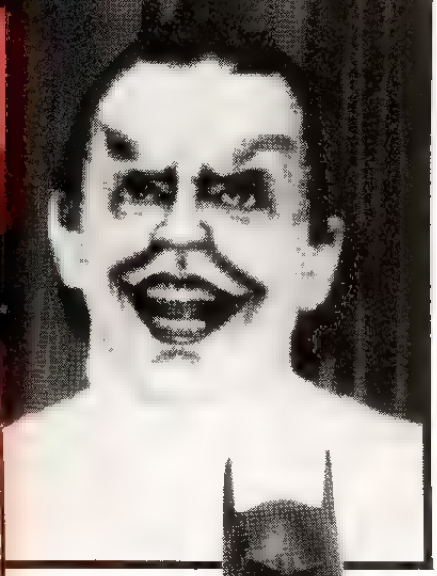

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Beatty

(continued from page 64)

what I thought you meant?' And I said, 'Do you mean what I think you mean *now*?' He said, 'Well, you know.' I said, 'Well, I mean whatever you tell me to mean, do you mean that? What should I do?' So, we talked about it."

Pacino and Madonna provide the movie with one of its most humorously surreal moments as the hunchbacked gangster choreographs the singer's production number. "You got someone like Al and someone like Madonna and the smartest thing to do is get out of the way—which is what I did," Beatty explains. "You set up a dynamic and you see what happens.

"I don't know how to direct. I would say it's something akin to having Napoleon's plan for a battle. When they asked Napoleon how he devised a battle plan, he said, 'First, we go there, then we see what happens.' On this movie, it was planned in advance. It had to be—and more than I would a realistic movie because this was all made on soundstages and on the studio backlot. There were the matte paintings, the creation of a full Moon that lasts day after day, stars that twinkle in a particular way. It was, to a great extent, a selfish pleasure. Sometimes, you just hope what's in your unconscious will get out there into (the audience's) unconscious, because if you're doing good work, you've got to trust your instinct."

With the movie's opening day just past, Beatty's instincts seem sound. *Dick Tracy* is a success. "It's very strange," he says, "because of what's happening in the movie business today. I find myself with the best reviews I ever had on *Dick Tracy* and I've had some pretty good reviews. These are the best reviews I've ever had, but everybody wants to know how well the T shirts are selling."

Amidst that merchandising frenzy, Disney already has a Dick Tracy stage show open at both theme parks and a ride-through attraction planned for the future. Naturally, the studio would like a second Tracy film. Beatty is non-committal. "Well, there certainly could be a sequel," he allows. "I've never made a sequel before, but the answer is I don't know because I don't. There *could* be a sequel—everybody didn't get killed.

"The thing about *Dick Tracy* is I really had a lot of fun making it. I had a lot of fun looking at it, too—and looking at people looking at it," says Warren Beatty. "If you *hate* this movie, I need to have a long talk with you."

Rabbit

(continued from page 56)

"But it's a really nice scene," concludes Cook. "It was really complicated. When we got it all reduced down to as few levels as possible there were still seven levels going to camera—*on ones.*"

The tones, shadows and highlights on the characters for the film's live-action portion were done using the same technique developed for *Who Framed Roger Rabbit*. The FX mattes were drawn at the California studio by a team headed by Dorse Lanpher, who was Don Bluth's top FX animator. The composites were completed at Industrial Light and Magic under the supervision of Ed Jones, who was also responsible for the composites on *Roger Rabbit*.

"Another thing we did was to add color separation shadows to the characters. It's a darker edge that adds a little roundness. We also added color separations to the computer animation; the coaster had a dark side and a light side depending upon the light's direction. This adds a little more dimensional feeling to the coaster and tied it in better with the rest of the animation. These shadow effects are inked and painted like the rest of the animation.

"The separation line is hand inked in a darker color. We would mark up the drawings with a non-photo blue pencil where we wanted the lines. Then, after the cel was Xeroxed, an inker would take the cels and the drawings, ink in the lines and then paint in the two separate colors. There was a tremendous amount of hand inking on this film—more than I have seen in a long time, besides maybe *Roger Rabbit*, and even quite a bit more than 'Tummy Trouble.'"

"The most difficult thing about directing animation," reveals director Minkoff, "is trying to visualize the whole thing before it gets put together, and making sure all the pieces will work once they are there. Once everything gets put together and you can see what works and what doesn't work, it's already too late to do much about it. It's done and it has to go into the theaters."

Minkoff adds, "The difficulty is that you don't see it in color until the very last process. Even the pencil test doesn't tell you *exactly* how something is going to play or look. Many times if it's slightly obscure in the pencil test, it makes you nervous. You get antsy and think that you should cut this down or worry that this isn't working or it isn't playing well, because people can't understand it. Suddenly, it gets to color and things can turn completely around.

"But when the animators are completing scenes one by one and sending them to camera and you start cutting them into the reel, you do start to see that some scenes may be a few frames too long or that this cut is a little bumpy, so we need to trim here or add something there. There is a certain amount of re-working as it comes together. It's sculptural in some sense."

Like everything else in the film business, though, music is added last, after the film is completed. The score for "Roller Coaster Rabbit" was composed by Bruce Broughton, a four-time Emmy award winner and an Oscar nominee for *Silverado*.

"When I first sat down with Bruce," Minkoff continues, "I was concerned to find out how he sees the show and how he sees the gags. Ultimately, you want to ensure that the music is going to support the comedy. It can work in contradiction. Everything, particularly, in a cartoon is based on rhythm. A certain timing, a certain tempo, the beat and the pauses—all of those things add up to the timing of the material and once you work out that timing, you want to make sure that the music supports what you've done.

"The first time I heard his score, he came in and played it on the piano That was only two or three days before we were actually going to record it on the soundstage. So, what he told me was that it would never sound worse that what he was playing on the piano. That was comforting!" laughs Minkoff. "And he was right.

"Bruce is a huge [Warner Bros. cartoon composer] Carl Stallings fan, so he wrote in that style, though with more of a modern sensibility."

Minkoff estimates that "Roller Coaster Rabbit" cost somewhere between $2 and $3 million to produce with the labor of 70 artists over a period of about nine months. At the moment, there are *no* immediate plans for further Maroon Cartoons starring Roger Rabbit, but that could change.

"One thing I really appreciated on this project," concludes Cook, "is that I think we've reached a new level of quality. I don't think we've *arrived*, yet, by any means. I've been at Disney for 8 1/2 years, and I know that we can do better. Still, *The Little Mermaid* and 'Roller Coaster Rabbit' were two experiences that I had where, for a change, they demanded the very, very best work that you can do. That's a rarity in animation. Or," Barry Cook pauses to reconsider, "it used to be a rarity; now, I think it's becoming the norm."

Art: Rick Hoberg/Dave Simons/Roger Rabbit#3/Disney Comics

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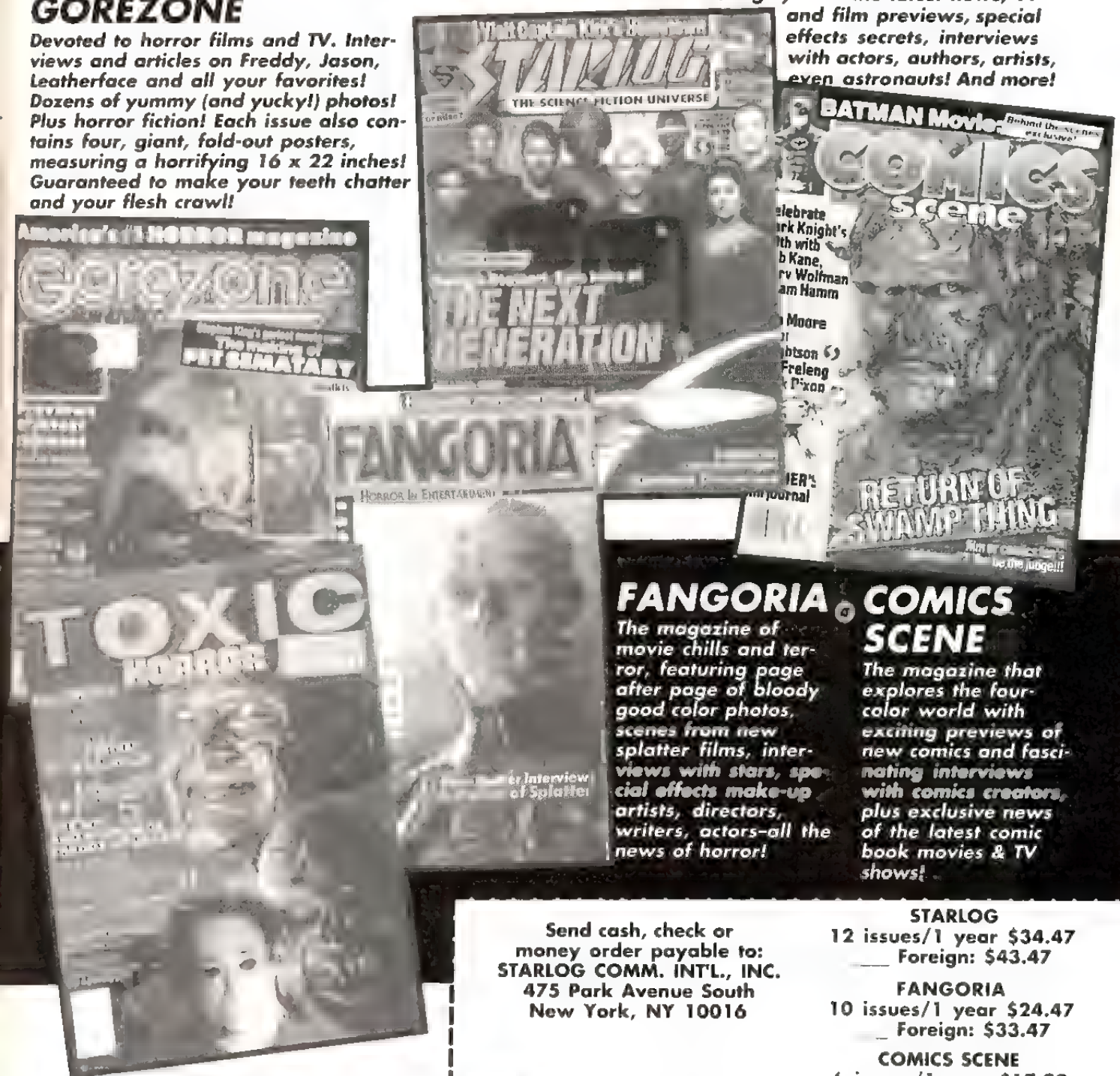

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Toons

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hunting. He goes up against Vinnie, a cool, wisecracking deer who teaches him you shouldn't be out in the woods shooting things with a shotgun. That has a little message and that's fine. As a rule, it's bad; we don't have characters blowing each other away with guns. We have them use every other kind of weapon: bombs, Acme TNT and samurai swords. But it's like everything in moderation or for funny effect. If it gets you a laugh, use it."

Dini points out that, "There *are* a few things that you can and you can't do—in the space of 50 years, from when the first Bugs Bunny cartoon came out—our society now looks upon in a negative way. For instance, racial stereotypes; you can't do them. Nor would you really want to in this day and age. Back in the '40s, there was much more of an innocence about that; it was an accepted norm to make fun of somebody who had a funny accent or looked different or had some physical deformity. As far as violence goes, if it's for a funny effect, you *do* it. Nobody really gets hurt in these cartoons."

Says Tom Ruegger, "Ultimately, we're trying to please the old Looney Tunes fans; we're trying to please Steven; we're trying to please the stations; we're trying to please ourselves. But the bottom line is, it's a series for kids. It *is* on in the afternoon. We *are* trying to please our audience out there. And I think with these characters who have very human kid foibles, we're addressing our audience pretty well."

In addition to the series' regular syndicated run, the prime-time special in September, and an original 80-minute made-for-home video feature for 1991 release, 15 episodes of *Tiny Toon Adventures* will be rerun on the Fox Network during weekends. According to Ruegger, these will be episodes, such as "Hollywood Plucky," that Warners feels will attract a primetime audience.

Jean MacCurdy mentions the possibility of other Warner Bros. projects, including another season of *Tiny Toon Adventures*.

"Yes, if it's well-received this fall, I think we'll probably go into production before the year's end," she says. "And we have some other series that we're developing. We've invested too much time and too much money into setting up this operation to let it go away after one show. We have such wonderfully talented people here. I hope we can be here a *long* time."

In other words, that's *not* all, folks.

O'Hanlon

(continued from page 53)

acterization close to home. "George pretty much played himself," says co-star Janet Waldo, the voice of daughter Judy Jetson. "He was up, funny, witty and warm, and wonderful to work with. He always had a little story to tell."

Her favorite memory of O'Hanlon was a recording session from the original *Jetsons* series in 1962, doing a novelty song called "Eep Opp Ork Ah-Ah, That Means I Love You." "I was late for the session because my agent gave me the wrong time," Waldo says. "George and I did it in about 45 minutes. That was the cutest song!"

Only 24 episodes were made for the original series, but during the next two decades, demand in the syndication market had grown so great that an entirely new set of shows was ordered up. "I never dreamed that in 20 years, the first series would be renewed," says Janet Waldo, "and they got the entire original cast!" (This was in 1985—in the new film, Mel Blanc, who died several months later, again voices Mr. Spacely, but two original cast members are absent: the late Daws "Elroy" Butler, interviewed in STARLOG #116, and Janet Waldo herself, who was replaced in the new feature by teenage singer Tiffany. But that's another story...)

For O'Hanlon, the new *Jetsons* was a blessing. The 20-odd years between the two series hadn't been easy for him. His acting career slowed down, though he continued to work as a writer for such TV programs as *The Jackie Gleason Show* and *Gilligan's Island*. In an interview in 1974, O'Hanlon complained that he would be hired to script a TV show, write into it an acting role for himself, then have to fight to get the job! He managed to keep going through the mid-1970s, though, picking up cameo roles in pictures such as Disney's *Charley and the Angel* and *The World's Greatest Athlete* and *Rocky* (the boxer, not the squirrel). Then, O'Hanlon suffered a debilitating stroke that robbed him of his eyesight.

When the call came from Hanna-Barbera in 1985 for 41 new *Jetsons* episodes, the actor at first thought it was a practical joke! But the call was real, and he had recovered enough from his illness to undertake the work. Janet Waldo quotes him as saying: "I'm so grateful for *The Jetsons* because Nancy [Mrs. O'Hanlon] will have some income and residuals." Now blind and sometimes requiring the use of a wheelchair, O'Hanlon didn't let his illness get in the way of his spirit, his "sly sense of humor," as Barbera puts it, or his performance. And if the actor was happy with the new work, so was the studio.

"Twice we brought George out of what would be semi-retirement, and it just inspired him," says Joe Barbera. "His wife would come to me and say, 'You don't know what you've done for him.' His eyesight was going, his energy was going, he really had to sit down, he used a cane; but when he entered that soundstage, man alive, here came *that voice* again. It was thrilling!"

Since O'Hanlon could no longer read from a script, his lines were now recorded separately from the rest of the cast. Recording director Gordon Hunt would read each line to the actor, who would then repeat it back in character as George Jetson. "He was great to work with, terrific," says Hunt. "He and Nancy would go over the lines at home and she would drive him in." As to his ability to recapture the character, Hunt says, "It was astounding! It sounded exactly the same. The only thing we did was speed it up about two-and-a-half percent, to give it a more youthful sound." Hunt says this was done for other cast members as well.

After completing 61 new *Jetsons* episodes between 1985 and 1987, O'Hanlon was called back for one last hurrah, reprising his role in *Jetsons: The Movie*. Those who were there recall that he was the same old George, still in good spirits and ever ready with a joke or a story about bygone Hollywood. He completed the principal recording for the film, then on February 10, 1989, went back into the studio to record some pick-up lines. He wasn't feeling well that day and was visibly uncomfortable, but wanted to keep working, even though Gordon Hunt suggested that he go home. It was in the studio, where he had given life to George Jetson for nearly 30 years, that George O'Hanlon suffered the massive stroke that ended his life the next day.

"He was a feisty Irish actor who loved to work and loved to laugh," Gordon Hunt recalls. "We had a lot of laughs in that studio."

There are no immediate plans to make new *Jetsons* episodes, but even if there were, Joe Barbera says recasting the voice of George Jetson would be difficult. "The character worked because of the quality of George's voice. He hadn't any gimmick in his voice that you can pick up on; he didn't have any particular thing in his voice except his natural voice, and to try to reproduce that is very difficult," Barbera says, adding simply: "George O'Hanlon was a great guy and did a wonderful job." CS

COMICS REPORTER

Calling Captain Planet

Let's face it. Earth's in trouble. Every time you turn on the news, there's a *story about acid rain, toxic* waste or yet another oil spill. To put it mildly, we need help! That's where *Captain Planet* enters the picture.

Captain Planet is the new environmentally-conscious animated series debuting on Ted Turner's TBS this fall. It's voiced by Whoopi Goldberg, Richard Gere, Jeff Goldblum, Ed Asner, LeVar Burton, Meg Ryan, Martin Sheen and Sting (Tom Cruise withdrew as the captain's voice, citing schedule conflicts). In the show, Captain Planet teams up with five children who represent Earth, Wind, Fire, Heart and Water to battle creatures out to destroy the planet's ecology. Among mankind's greatest animated enemies are Hoggish Greedly, Rigger, Verminous Skumm, Looten Plunder, Sly Sludge, Dr. Blight and Duke Nukem.

"Ted Turner said the words, 'Captain Planet,' and I said, 'What's that, Ted?' " recalls Barbara Pyle, Vice President of Environmental Policy for TBS and the series' executive producer. "And he said, 'It's a cartoon designed to save the environment.' I said, 'OK,' and we've been working on it for the past year, and are very pleased. The response has been overwhelming.

"Each one of the episodes," she adds, "takes an existing environmental situation and deals with it in an action-adventure context. We deal with oil *spills, elephant poaching, drift*-net fishing, toxic waste dumping, ozone depletion, acid rain, strip-mining, garbage dumping, rain forests, nuclear waste, deforestation, ocean pollution, smog, war, the Greenhouse Effect...you name it."

One of the series' most difficult aspects has been the development of scripts which deal with these issues in such a way as to reach the target audience of 5 to 10-year-olds.

"It's almost impossible," Pyle laughs. "This is one of the biggest challenges of my life. I've been working in environmental issues for 10 years, doing the bulk of the environmental programming for Turner Broadcasting long before it was fashionable. *Captain Planet* has been a challenge on every level, turning environmental issues into entertainment, being action-adventure, exciting, funny and compelling, and allowing the viewer to learn without feeling like he or she *is* learning.

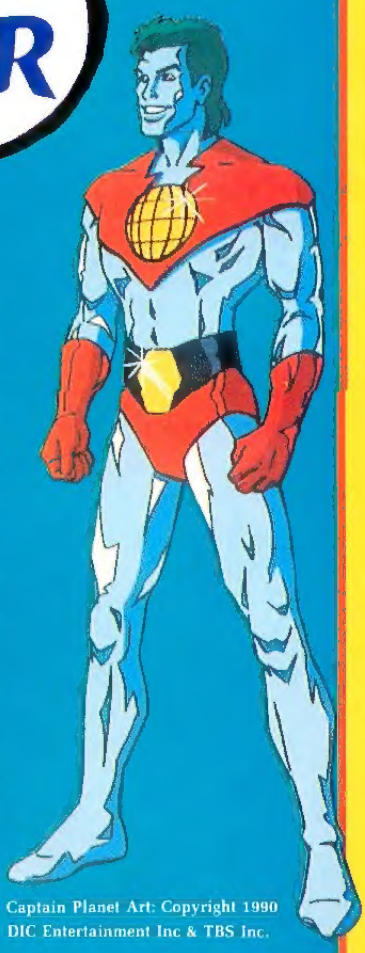
"At each episode's end," she continues, "like at the end of any fantasy-adventure, you *will* understand what the issue is. We'll have a 30-second tag that will bring the issue back to reality. So, the kids will understand exactly what we're trying to say, but they'll have a good time doing it. The format can be compared to *Star Trek* in that we're dealing with issues in an entertainment structure."

Already, she's quite confident of *Captain Planet*'s seemingly inevitable success.

"This is the challenge of the decade," Barbara Pyle states emphatically. "We really believe that this is a cartoon that's going to make a difference and one that will have far-reaching impact. I wish we'd had a show like this when we were kids. Maybe we wouldn't be in the shape we're in now."

—Edward Gross

Ready to save the environment is Captain Planet.



Captain Planet Art: Copyright 1990 DIC Entertainment Inc & TBS Inc.

COMICS screen

These characters are being developed for other media. All projects are live-action unless specified. Those marked by an asterisk (*) have changed status since last listing. Not everything listed will ultimately be made. Abbreviations: S=script; D=director; P=producer. **Attn. all pros:** Clarifications & other info to be added to this list are cheerfully invited. Send to COMICS SCENE, 475 Park Ave. South, 8th Flr., NY, NY 10016. (Info as of 7/10/90)

* **The Addams Family.** Film. Orion. S: Caroline Thompson.

The Adventures of Pico and Columbus. Animated feature. Bavaria Film. Phil Nibbelink, directing animator; Scott Santoro, special FX.

The Airtight Garage. Animated. P: Soyuzmultifilm Studios, North American Trading Co. & Starwatcher Graphics. S: Randy Lofficier. In production.

The American. Film. P: Joel Silver. S: Mark Verheiden.

American Flagg! Film.

An American Tail. Sequel. TV series may follow. HB.

Annie. Film sequel. D: Lewis Gilbert. Musical *Annie II: Miss Hannigan's Revenge.*

Ant-Man. Film.

* **Archie.** Film. *Archie & Veronica.* S: Nora & Delia Ephron. Warner Bros. Archie: Corey Haim. D: Joel Schumacher. TV series no go.

Arzach. Film of Moebius hero. P: Kirk Thatcher.

The Avengers. Film. John Steed. S: Sam Hamm.

Babar. HBO. Nelvana.

Batman II. S: Sam Hamm.

Beetle Bailey. Film.

Beetlejuice. Animated Saturday a.m. series on ABC & video. Film sequel being scripted.

Blackhawk. Film. Amblin. S: Dan Aykroyd.

Blade. Film. S: Lee Goldberg & William Rabkin.

* **Blondie.** Film musical. Disney. S: Alfred Uhry. P: Francine LeFrak, Dean Young. May film next spring.

* **James Bond.** Animated series, *Adventures of James Bond Jr.* Premieres fall '91.

Betty Boop. Animated half-hour *Betty Boop's Hollywood Mystery.* CBS. Film. D: Richard Fleischer.

Brenda Starr, Reporter. Film.

* **Bugs Bunny.** New syndicated animated series, *Tiny Toon Adventures.* Debuts fall. (see article)

* **Bullwinkle.** *Boris & Natasha,* with Sally Kellerman & Dave Thomas. S: Charles Fradin. D: Charles Martin Smith. New Line Cinema will distribute. August release.

Captain America. Film. S: Stephen Tolkin. D: Albert Pyun. Cap: Matt Salinger.

* **Captain Planet.** Animated series. DIC. (see item)

Cathy. Animated TV specials on CBS.

Charlie Chan. Film. Chan: B.D. Wong. D: Fred Levinson. P: Gene Kirkwood, John Hyde.

Chicken Man. Animated series based on Dick Orkin's '70s radio spoofs. Calico.

Chip & Dale. *Rescue Rangers* airing. Animated film due '91.

City of Darkness. Film. S: Patrick Cirillo & Joe Gayton. Comics superhero & villain battle in real world. P: Michael Douglas, Rick Bieber. Columbia.

Conan. Film.

Cracked. Superhero parody.

* **Daredevil.** TV series. P: Shelley Duvall. She seeks rights for Fox Network show. Contracts *unsigned.*

Deathlok. Film.

Delta Tenn. TV movie. Shannon Tweed. Touchstone. NBC.

* **Dick Tracy.** Sequel(?).

Dinosaurs for Hire. Film. S: Richard Finney & James Bonny. 20th Fox. Creature FX: Jim Henson's Creature Shop.

DNAgents. Film. UA.

* **Dr. Strange.** Film. Zoetrope. D: Alex Cox. P: Francis Coppola. May be derailed by Coppola's financial troubles.

Droopy. Co-stars with son Dribble in *Tom & Jerry Kids*, HB animated series for TBS.

Evangeline. Film. Funnybook Films.

* **Family Dog.** Primetime animated half-hour series. 13 episodes. CBS. P: Steven Spielberg, Tim Burton. Debuts mid-season.

Fantastic Four. Film. Neue Constantin. P: Bernd Eichinger.

The Far Side. Film. D: Alan Rudolph. Seeks studio.

Felix the Cat. Animated film. Produced, still no release.

* **Fish Police.** Animated series. Hanna-Barbera. CBS. Also film. S: Gary K. Wolf. P: Michael Uslan, Ben Melniker.

* **The Flash.** CBS TV series. Debuts fall. Warner Bros. Flash: John Wesley Shipp. Tina McGee: Amanda Pays. Story editor: Howard Chaykin. Now shooting.

* **The Flintstones.** Film. Fred: John Goodman. Universal & Amblin. April filming maybe.

Fu Manchu. Film. *Secret of Fu Manchu.* Fu: David Carradine.

Garfield. Saturday a.m. series, *Garfield & Friends.*

* **Ghost Rider.** Film. New Line. To shoot this fall.

The Green Hornet. Film. Universal. Being written.

Green Lantern. Film. P: Joel Silver. Being written.

Grimjack. Film.

Gumby. Film.

He-Man. *New Adventures of He-Man*, a 65-episode series, due fall 1990. LBS Communications.

Honkytonk Sue. Film.

* **Human Target.** TV movie pilot. ABC. Stars Rick Springfield, Clarence Clemons.

* **The Incredible Hulk.** TV movie *Revenge* being scripted.

Inspector Gadget. Live-action half-hour TV series version. DIC. For Family Channel.

* **Iron Man.** Film. D: Stuart Gordon. Universal. Deal not yet signed.

* **The Jetsons.** Animated film. HB/Universal. (see article) Also, *new*, separate live-action film project. Universal.

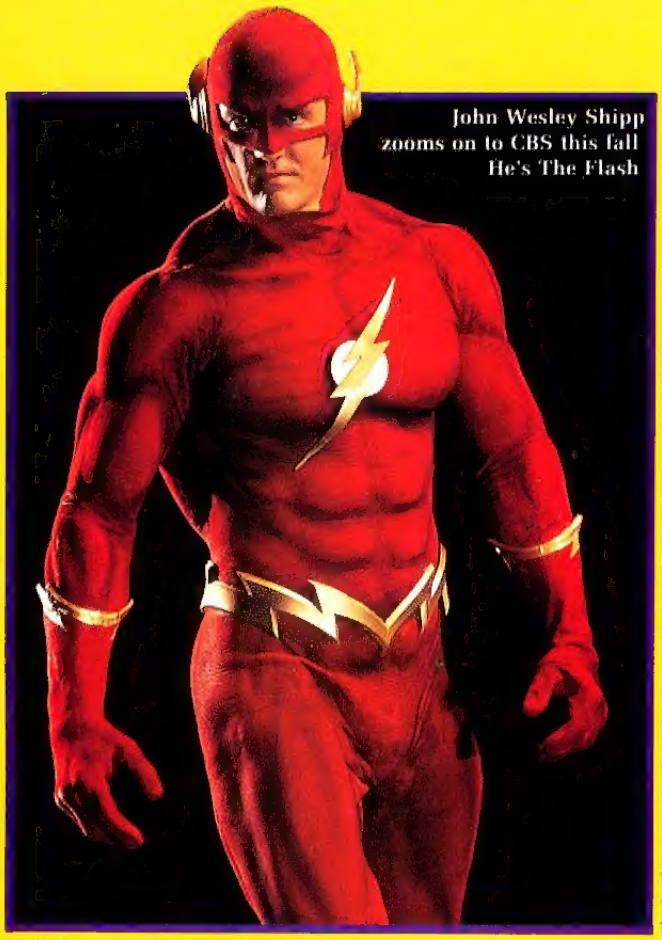
Jo Jo. Film. P: Lee Caplin. S: Mike Chapman.

Jonny Quest. Film.

Judge Dredd. Film. S: Howard Chaykin & John Moore. P: Charles Lippincott.

Justice League. TV movie pilot. NBC. Lorimar.

Kaanga. Film. S:(also D) Geoffrey Edwards, Sam Bernard. P: Lee Caplin, Blake Edwards, Tony Adams.



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Kaptain Keen & Ko. Planned animated series. Rankin-Bass.

Lt. Blueberry. Film.

Li'l Abner. TV. P: Max & Micheline Keller.

* **Little Nemo in Slumberland.** Animated film. TMS Ent. Due fall. Songs: Richard & Robert Sherman.

The Lone Ranger. Syndicated half-hour TV series debuts fall. Separate film. D: John Landis. Universal.

Lone Wolf & Cub. Film. P: Ed Pressman. S: Bill Wisher.

Lucky Luke. TV series (for international broadcast). Terence Hill, star. Silvio Berlusconi Communications. 10 episodes.

MacDoodle Street. Film. Columbia. Based on Mark Alan Stamaty's *Village Voice* strip.

Mai the Psychic Girl. Film. S/P: Larry Wilson. P: Walter Hill, Carolco.

Mandrake. Film. Italy's Pentafilm.

* **The Mask.** Film. New Line. Shooting to start soon.

Mickey Mouse. Animated featurette "The Prince & the Pauper" due out fall '90.

Mr. Jigsaw. Ron Fortier-Gary Kato character optioned for animation by Rankin-Bass.

Mr. Magoo. Film. P: Steven Tisch. Also animated film with niece, Megan Magoo.

Mr. X. Film. P: Jim Cash & Jack Epps.

My Secret Identity. Syndicated sitcom.

Nancy. Film. P: Peter Muller.

Negative Man. New Bob Kane hero. Live-action series. Nelvana.

Neil the Horse. Animation/live-action project.

Nick Fury, Agent of SHIELD. Film. S: Greg Pruss.

Joe Palooka. Musical.

The Phantom. Film. P: Bruce Sherlock, Peter Sjoquist, John Torv, Rodney Price. S: Ken Shadie. *Phantom* creator Lee Falk, consultant.

Plastic Man. Film. S: Charles Gale. Warner/Amblin.

* **Prince Valiant.** Animated.

The Prowler. Film. Funnybook Films.

* **The Punisher.** Film. Dolph Lundgren. On video this fall from IVE.

Radio Boy. Animated. Rankin-Bass.

Reid Fleming, World's Toughest Milkman. Film. *May* star Jim Belushi. S: creator David Boswell. P: Matt Weisman, Joseph Loeb II.

Richie Rich. Film. RR: Fred Savage. P: Joel Silver, John Davis. Seeks studio.

* **RoboCop.** Second sequel. S: Frank Miller. Animated *Marvel Universe* may spin off solo Robo series.

* **The Rocketeer.** Film. Disney. D: Joe Johnston. S: Danny Bilson & Paul De Meo. P: Lawrence & Charles Gordon, Lloyd Levin. To shoot this summer.

* **Roger Rabbit.** Further animated shorts now in doubt.

* **Scooby Doo.** Film. W Bros.

Secret Agent X-9. Animated film.

Sgt. Preston of the Yukon. TV revival projected.

Sgt. Rock. Film. Rock: Bruce Willis. D: John McTiernan. P: Joel Silver. S: Steven de Souza & David Peoples. To film in March '91.

* **The Shadow.** Film. S: David Koepp. Universal.

* **The She-Hulk.** ABC TV series idea dead. Film. S/D: Larry Cohen. Contracts *un*signed.

* **The Simpsons.** Animated series. FBC. New time slot: Thursday, 8 p.m.

* **Spider-Man.** Film. S: Neil Ruttenberg & Joseph Goldman. 21st Century *may* transfer project to Columbia. Animated *Marvel Universe* segment.

Sub-Mariner. Film.

Suicide Squad. CBS TV pilot. Lorimar.

* **Superboy.** Syndicated TV series' third season begins fall. Ilan-Mitchell Smith left cast.

* **Superman.** *Superman V.* Being written. S: Mark Jones & Cary Bates. Chris Reeve says he won't be involved. *May* lense in Florida.

* **Swamp Thing.** Half-hour TV series for USA Network. 13 episodes. Filming at Universal Florida. ST: Dick Durock.

Tales from the Crypt. HBO series.

* **Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles.** Animated series in syndication & on CBS. Live sequel to shoot this fall.

* **Thor.** Film. Stonebridge Entertainment. Contracts *un*signed.

Tom & Jerry. New animated 13-episode *Tom & Jerry Kids* for TBS. Due this fall.

Trouble with Girls. Film. 20th Fox & Funnybook Films. S: Will Jacobs & Gerard Jones. P: Matt Pepler, Neal Tabachnick.

* **Two-Fisted Tales.** Half-hour anthology. FBC. Four episodes.

Vampirella. Film. S/D: Jim Wynorski plans two films to shoot back-to-back.

V for Vendetta. Film. Warner.

WARP. Film. S/P: Mark Victor & Michael Grais.

Watchmen. Film. S: Sam Hamm. P: Joel Silver. D: Terry Gilliam. Seeks studio.

Wizard of Id. Film. S: Steven de Souza, Dana Olsen. D: David & Jerry Zucker.

Wolverine. Film.

Wonder Woman. TV series. Either for syndication or CBS.

The X-Men. Animated five-episode mini-series for FBC. Marvel Productions.

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